



# RAY'S REWARD

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ISABEL FOSTER





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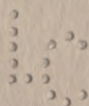
“Oh, I never saw anything so darling as *that* Dutch baby! Oh, if only it belonged to me I’d be happy every minute. How could anything ever be so cunning and dear! It’s got on a skirt as long as its own grandmother would wear; and a waist exactly like its mother would wear; and a plaid apron—  
*Oh, did any one ever!*”

Ch. XI.



# RAY'S REWARD

BY  
ISABEL FOSTER



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TO  
MY MOTHER  
WITH THE LOVING WISH  
THAT THESE PAGES  
MAY RECALL  
MANY HAPPY MEMORIES



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# Ray's Reward

## I

### LANDING AT NAPLES

“**I** FEEL the steamer stopping,” said Ray suddenly; “oh, why do we stop such a long way from the land? how I wish that we might go nearer.”

“I know what it is,” responded Jack, “I saw the sailors lifting the great, great big anchor from the deck and throwing it down in the sea.”

“What lots of little rowboats,” exclaimed his brother Will; “where did they come from all of a sudden.”

“Oh, look, look!” cried Ray, “some people are throwing money down in one of the little boats. Oh-h-h, what a pity! it fell in the water. Oh, the man is jumping in after it.”

“Ho, he’ll never find a little bit of a coin in a whole ocean full of water.”

“He’s found it!”



"He's got it in his mouth!"

"Lots of people are throwing money in the water now."

"Look, look! there is a boy diving from a boat. How quick he is! Now he's caught it in his mouth."

"There in that other boat, are peasants with bunches of flowers."

"Listen! there over in that boat; see, a man is playing a mandolin and a woman is singing."

"There's so much to look at I don't know where to look 'cause I'm sure to miss something," said Ray excitedly; "everything is so interesting. Where is Beth?"

"She is over there with Mother. Here they come," replied Will. "Isn't this just great Mother? did you and Beth see the boys diving for the coins? and they never missed one."

"Yes indeed we did; and have you boys and Ray been getting a good look at old Vesuvius? Do you notice the smoke rising from it? and this is one of the most beautiful harbors in the world."



"Yes, yes," replied Jack, "but it's jolly hard to catch a penny in your mouth when you're diving in the water. I would rather watch that boy."

"What perfectly lovely fruit," said Beth, "in such cute tiny baskets. Why can't we get some?"

"I'll go down," offered Will, "on one of the lower decks and see if I can make them hear me."

"No," said his mother, "wait and let us see what other people are doing."

"They're fixing a basket now; see Mother, they're fastening it on a long pole. Oh what fun! They're lifting the pole way up to this deck."

"There, a lady took the basket off of the pole, and she is throwing money down to the people in the boat."

"Let us make signs for them to hand us up a basket. They don't see us! Now they do! I'll take the basket off," said Beth.

"Shall I throw the money?" asked Mrs. Gray.

"Let me," insisted Will.



"No, let me," begged Jack.

"I intend to do it," said Will, "I asked first."

Both boys tried to take the money from their mother's hand and between them let it fall over the steamer's side.

"If you hadn't interfered!" exclaimed Will.

"But I knew that I could throw it best," retorted Jack.

"It's in the water," called Ray; "the boy is diving—he's got it already."

"He thinks that it was thrown into the water for him," said Mrs. Gray. "See, the woman who sent us the fruit is now bowing and smiling at us, as she waits for her money. Here, Beth, suppose you throw it this time."

Beth flushed with the importance of her task, and threw the money with a desperate swing of her short arm. Down it went over the heads of those in the boats who jumped high with arms upstretched in their efforts to catch it.

Down into the water it went, and the



boy diver soon had it between his teeth, smiling and bowing, while the passengers on the steamer laughed and clapped him for his cleverness.

“The idea,” said Jack, “of a girl trying to throw straight. I knew Beth couldn’t do it. If you want to waste some more money, Mother, you had better let Ray try. Girls never can throw.”

“Am I really to try?” asked Ray eagerly; “that will be fun.”

Mrs. Gray had not thought of chancing the loss of another coin; but now she handed one to Ray, cautioning her to be careful. The color came into Ray’s face and she clasped the money tight in her hand. The next moment it flashed in the sunlight and fell into the woman’s apron upheld to receive it, and then she bowed and smiled and kissed her hand to Ray.

“How did you do it?” asked Beth, while the boys declared that it was just by chance that it fell in the right place.

“Bet you couldn’t do it again,” insisted Jack.



"Well, I'm not going to have any more money spent for this very small basket of fruit," declared Mrs. Gray; "but I'm glad, Ray, that you have managed to get it paid for at last."

"Could you do it again?" persisted Jack.

"I think I could do it just the same again," she replied.

"Well, how did you do it?"

"I just felt I could do it 'cause it was given to me to do, and it was right for the woman to get it 'cause it was really her's. I waved it high in the air so as she could see it was for her, then I dropped it and let her do the rest. You saw her move the boat right under where it fell."

"How funny!" interrupted Beth. "I tried to throw it far out so it would surely reach to where her boat was, and I don't know where I did throw it. Didn't you try to throw it into her boat?"

"No, 'cause her boat kept moving about so. I just showed her where it was and how I was going to drop it, then my part was over. It was her part to catch it, and she



did. I couldn't do her part for her could I?"

"Why, I don't know. I was so anxious about her catching it that I hardly noticed what I was doing at all."

"That's funny," laughed Ray; "you did the wrong end first; you were busier about her catching it than about your throwing it. Maybe she was busy at the wrong end too."

"How queer you are, Ray; what do you mean by being busy at the wrong end?"

"Why, Beth, don't you see? you were all anxious about her catching it, when you really ought to have been thinking about your part; and maybe she was all anxious about your throwing it, instead of watching her end of catching it."

"Fiddlesticks!" broke in Jack; "girls can't throw anyhow."

"Well, you boys didn't do any better than I did," said Beth, tossing her head, "and Ray did, so there——she's a girl."

"I could have thrown it all right," retorted Jack angrily, "if Will hadn't been determined to do it——"



"Aw, so could I, if you hadn't grabbed the money same time as I did," said Will. "You never think anybody can do anything the right way except you. I wouldn't be so cock sure about a thing as you are——"

"Boys, do stop quarreling," begged Mrs. Gray; "pick up our packages; the passengers are hurrying on the tender and we must go."

The children were much excited over the prospect of landing in Europe—really being on land again after ten days on the water, where for many days no land was ever in sight.

They enjoyed getting off the big steamer and on the little one which was to land them at Naples. They were entertained to see the custom-house officials opening everybody's trunks to see what they contained and then pasting little slips of paper on each one that meant it was all right.

Then Mrs. Gray and the children got into a carriage to drive to the hotel, and they all thought it was the queerest looking city that they had ever seen. Some of



the streets were as narrow as alleys, but the houses were very high and different families lived in each separate story, and clothes-lines were hung all the way across the street from opposite houses, and all the washing was hung on them. It looked very odd to the Americans to see all sorts of clothes hanging the whole way across a street from every story.

As Ray said, every one seemed to live out of doors. Italian women were cooking in little stoves on the street, in front of where they lived. Others were knitting, and men were making shoes. There was so much going on for them to see, that the children were sorry when they reached the hotel; but Mrs. Gray was glad to get settled and rest awhile. Then the children, feeling that there was so much to be seen that they could not stay in their rooms, obtained permission to go down into the beautiful garden, just across from the hotel, where she could see them from the balcony in her room.

As they reached the hotel entrance a



lady, dressed in black, called their names; but the boys were talking so loudly that they went on without hearing her, and Beth was close on their heels. Ray was a short distance behind and caught the words: "Ray—Ray Gray!"

She paused a moment to listen and saw the lady coming to her.

"Why, Ray, I am very glad that you are all at this hotel. I lost sight of your mother in the excitement and hurry of landing, and I forgot to ask her where you were going to stay."

Ray looked surprised for a moment and then said: "My name isn't Ray Gray."

"What do you mean, dear? I cannot surely have mistaken your mother's name."

"I haven't any mother. I'm an orphan; didn't you know?"

"Of course not, dear, or I would not have mentioned it. I thought you were all Mrs. Gray's children."

"They are," Ray said, pointing to the others who had crossed the street and were beckoning her to join them. "But I live in



an orphanage with a lot of other orphans, and when I go home I have to live there again—there! I was forgetting all about ‘the speck of blue,’ and I promised I would keep on remembering it about everything.”

Mrs. Lester looked puzzled.

“I don’t quite understand you,” she said kindly, “what did you mean by ‘the speck of blue’? But I see the other children are impatient. I must not keep you so I will walk across to the garden with you, and then you may tell me what you mean.”

“Maybe I can’t make you understand,” said Ray, “but knowing about it makes everything easier all the time.

“It happened the day we got to Gibraltar. You remember how excited everybody was to land there, and how stormy it looked all day when we were coming to it? Well, I kept watching the clouds and it got darker and darker and I got crosser, and once when I was saying how mean it was for a storm to spoil everybody’s pleasure, Mrs. Warren told me that I was spoiling my own fun. Then she told me a saying,



but I can't remember the way she said it, only it meant that if the sky was all blue with only one tiny cloud on it, some people wouldn't notice the sky, they'd keep fussing themselves up about the one tiny cloud. But, she said, if the sky was covered with dark, angry clouds with only a speck of blue sky to be seen, some people would keep seeing 'the speck of blue.' Then she showed me where the clouds parted and we could find some sky, and we decided to watch it and see it grow larger—and, don't you remember, the sun was out before we got off the steamer to see Gibraltar? The next day she talked a lot to me, and she showed me how to look for a 'speck of blue' in everything. It's such fun—most as good as a fairy wand, and more fun than pretending things. All my life, whenever I wanted anything so bad that it hurt 'cause I couldn't have it, I just pretended what I wanted was real; and now what Mrs. Warren told me is whole heaps better, 'cause 'the speck of blue' is really real you know, 'cause the clouds



come and go, but the sky keeps on in just the same place."

Ray paused out of breath with her rapid explanation, and her companion smoothed the folds of her black dress as she said sadly: "For some people there is very little blue sky. But you must join your little friends and I will go back to the hotel."

That night Mrs. Lester sat with Mrs. Gray on her balcony and when Ray went to say good-night to them, she arrived as Mrs. Lester was saying: "I have quite lost my heart to your daughter Beth. I never tire looking at her; she is like a beautiful picture with those golden curls and great brown eyes."

Ray finished saying good-night and went to bed, but she had to pull the bed-clothes up over her head so that no one would hear her crying as she sobbed to herself: "Nobody loves me; if I had gold curls and big brown eyes Mrs. Lester would, but she loves Beth, and Beth doesn't need it; she's got a mother and father and brothers to love her. Oh, I wish I belonged to some-



body or somebody belonged to me! I can't find even a tiny 'speck of blue' tonight! I can't—I can't—maybe 'cause it's dark. I'll think better in the morning when the light comes again—if I only had anything belonging to me that loved me—maybe some day I can have a dog."



## II

### THE BLUE GROTTO

**T**HE next day Mrs. Gray and the children, accompanied by Mrs. Lester, were on a small steamer going to the island of Capri which has at its rocky base many caves or caverns, among them the famous Blue Grotto, which the children were wild to see.

While the children were amusing themselves in many ways on the little steamer, the two women were talking together.

“I learned only yesterday,” said Mrs. Lester, “that Ray is an orphan. She seems an unusual child, and impressed me from the first day I saw you, as such a strange element in your family; for I then supposed she was one of your children.”

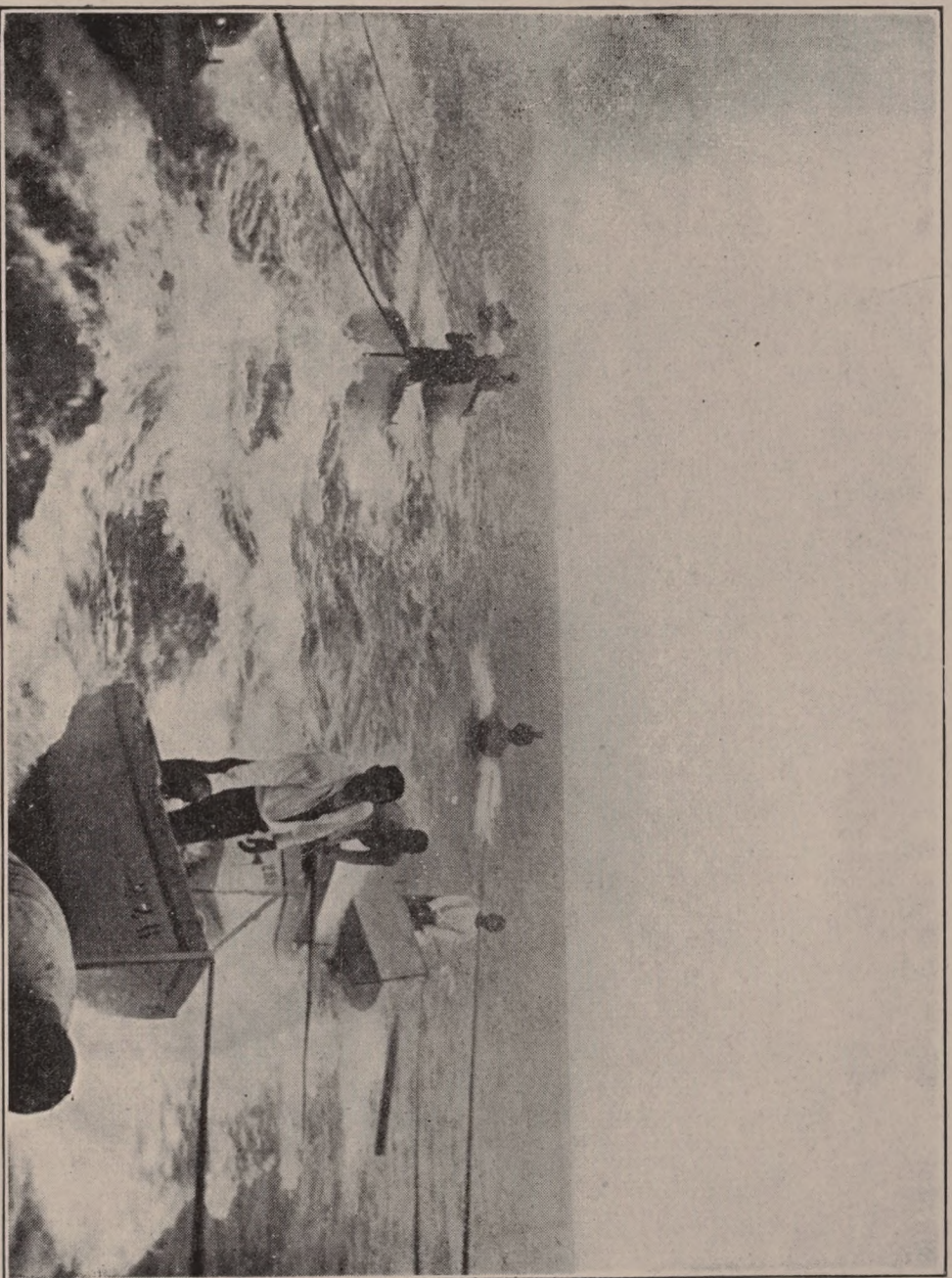
“No relation whatever,” Mrs. Gray hastened to say, “and I did not wish to bring her, as I do not know what sort of an in-



fluence her constant companionship may have over my Beth; but I couldn't get out of it very well. It came about through a rich old man, one of the directors of the orphanage, who took a fancy to Ray and her air-castles. He used to send for her to go with him on his drives, and it diverted him to hear her talk. It seems she talked to good effect, as she was always making believe they were in Venice riding in gondolas. When his will was read it was found that he had endowed the orphanage with a large sum with the stipulation that Ray be sent to Europe on a trip which must include Venice, with a suitable chaperon, before any of his money could be used for the orphanage. The whole affair made quite a commotion, but the directors could not afford to lose the rich legacy. I am on one of the committees, and so when they learned that I intended taking a trip with my children this summer, they decided that their opportunity had come; and I really knew not how to refuse."

"It certainly was kind of you, for Ray





Rowboats attached to the steamer, after taking the passengers into The Blue Grotto at Capri. Ch. II.







is not an attractive child—" At this point Will rushed up to them.

"We're there! we're there! Look, Mother, at the rowboats; and only two people can go in any boat and Jack and I are going in the same one."

"But will it be safe? is there a careful person to row you?"

All the children were by this time crowding around.

"Of course it's safe for boys," said Jack, with the air of having decided the question, "it wouldn't do for the girls; they'd get frightened, going into a dark cave with only an Italian who couldn't understand a word they said."

"Can't both the girls go in a boat with me?" inquired Mrs. Gray; "we're none of us very large."

"Maybe Beth will go with me," said Mrs. Lester. I am alone and would not enjoy having a stranger with me."

"That is very kind and will arrange it nicely," replied Mrs. Gray.

But Beth had pushed up against her



mother and said: "I want to go with you. I don't think it's fair for Ray to have my mother when we go into the dark cave."

Poor Ray stood looking from one to another and asked helplessly: "Can't I go in the Blue Grotto with just somebody?"

"Why, I hope that you'll go with me," exclaimed Mrs. Lester; "that's our arrangement, one big person and one little person. There's a boat now; we'll get in that one, and start before the others decide how they are going."

Ray's sober face brightened, and when she was seated beside Mrs. Lester she exclaimed ecstatically: "Let's make believe it's a cave where robbers have hidden most beautiful stones—diamonds and pearls and corals."

"Very well we will; and now we are about to enter. Oh, I did not know that the entrance was so small. I don't like to go into a place like that."

"Why it's just only a hole," said Ray, "and we'll have to duck our heads;" and they both bent far forward, but the boat



stopped and the man rowing made motions to them which they did not understand for a little while.

Then Ray called out suddenly: "We've got to lie down flat in the boat — did you ever!"

"We can't do that," began Mrs. Lester; then she looked where Ray's finger pointed and saw that the people in the boat which at that moment was entering the Grotto were lying flat in the bottom of the boat. She therefore got down and Ray nestled close beside her, while they saw the man take hold of a heavy chain and draw the boat through the opening.

"I feel as if we should never get outside again," shivered Mrs. Lester, shutting her eyes for an instant to open them suddenly at Ray's exclamation: "Oh — oh — oh!"

Looking around she saw that now they were through the small opening and were within a rock-grotto of considerable size.

"It's the bluest place I ever saw," cried Ray rapturously; "blue rocks everywhere around us and over our heads; blue water;



blue boats; blue people; blue—blue—blue. It isn't a robbers' cave—we've made a mistake, haven't we? this belongs to fairies and kelpies. It's the nearest to fairy-land I ever got in my life."

"It's as wonderful as it is beautiful," replied Mrs. Lester. "I am glad that I did not turn back at the entrance."

They were soon rowed out again where the outside air looked unnatural and the light very intense and glaring after the soft blue glow of the grotto.

When they were again on the steamer they found Jack and Will quarreling.

"You would have your own way," said Jack. "I told you to do as I did."

"Oh yes," retorted Will, "you know it all, all the time."

"Well, I didn't lose my hat, did I?"

"Oh, Will," broke in Mrs. Gray, "have you lost your new straw hat?"

"Yes he has, and I told him to take it off when we got in the rowboat, but he had to have his own way and kept it on."

"I took it off when we had to lie down,



and that was enough if you hadn't jerked up your arm at the wrong time—"

"If you'd taken it off when I told you then you wouldn't have lost it."

"I did not think well of you boys going without an older person with you," complained Mrs. Gray; "and now I'll buy you a cheap cap. I can't keep getting good straw hats and having you lose them."

The boys were sulky for the greater part of the day with each other; and when the party reached Naples and Mrs. Gray bought a cheap cap for Will he grew very cross indeed.

Jack teased him and, calling his attention to a half-starved looking dog along their way, said: "That's the way you look Will. That cur has exactly your expression with that cap on the side of your head."

Will was growing more angry every moment, and when he saw the dog with its head cocked on one side regarding him, he picked up a large stone and threw it with cruel force at the dog. There was a sharp yelp of pain and the starved, weak-



ened dog lay on the ground moaning very piteously.

Every one was too startled for instant speech; but quick as a flash Ray was bending over it with endearing words, and although it had never heard such words before, it felt the sympathy in the voice, and its tail wagged feebly in response.

“You poor little orphan dog,” crooned Ray, bending over it, “you haven’t got anybody to love you. You don’t belong to anybody, and now you’re hurt.”

The cries ceased for a moment and the little creature tried to drag itself nearer to the kind voice.

Mrs. Gray approached: “It can’t be much hurt,” she said; “it will soon get all right; and we must go on or we’ll be too late for supper. I am astonished and pained, Will, to see that you have such cruelty in your nature. I am ashamed that your sister should see such a disposition in you.”

Will made no reply as he was already deeply sorry that his action had hurt the dog; but he felt too angry to show any



regret. For a wonder Jack was silent also, feeling sorry that he had teased his brother to such an outburst. Both boys were ashamed of themselves so they walked on ahead of the others. Beth looked after them and then joined her mother and Ray.

Mrs. Lester had left the party when the steamer landed them back in Naples, and had been driven directly back to the hotel.

Beth looked pityingly at the dog, but said to her mother: "Let's go on for I can't bear to hear it cry that way. I don't see how you can stand it, Ray."

"Yes, Ray, come now," urged Mrs. Gray, "we can do nothing for it. Some one will come along presently and tend to it."

"Oh, please let me stay with it and love it awhile? I don't want any supper. Indeed I'm not hungry; do, do please, let me stay with it awhile; and when you think it's too late for me to stay, the boys can come for me. See, it's wagging its tail! Oh, it licks my hand! I can't go — oh, I can't go!"



"This is nonsense, Ray; I cannot permit you to give me so much trouble; you must do as I say and come at once."

"Yes, Mrs. Gray," said Ray obediently; then she added: "good-by doggie."

With eyes filled with tears she did not trust herself to look again in the dog's direction but hurried on beside the others.

For a few seconds they heard no sound from the dog; then a woeful howl greeted their ears as the poor creature felt itself deserted.

Ray quickened her steps and resolutely forced herself not to look, while the tears would not stay in her eyes, but ran down her cheeks.

Another mournful howl, followed by pitiful cries as of a creature in pain.

All three glanced back involuntarily to see what had occurred, and saw the poor little dog making efforts to follow, dragging one leg which seemed helpless.

The tears dried on Ray's cheeks as she looked, and without a word she ran swiftly back to the dog.



The cries stopped and the tail wagged feebly.

“You poor, hurt little thing,” sobbed Ray, “how can you forgive me for leaving you? and you were trying to come after me, poor little doggie!”

With motherly tenderness she gathered the dog in her arms; it nestled gratefully against her, looking at her with loving eyes and licking her hand.

Hastening to rejoin Mrs. Gray and Beth she said with sorrowful determination: “I can’t leave it—I know I’m naughty not to obey and I’m sorry, awful sorry—but it was crawling after me, even when it hurt it so—just please let me take it as far as the hotel, and give it one chance, ’cause maybe some man will be kind to it—don’t make me leave it alone, crying after me, please, *please*. I must take it with me to the hotel, then you can punish me—even if I have to go back to the orphanage, and never see Venice.”

“I don’t wish to punish you, Ray; but look at your dress, with a dirty street-dog



against it. I'll let you take it to the hotel but it ends there. Whatever they do with it you must go with us to our room where I can brush off the dirt from your dress. You see you are making a great deal of unnecessary trouble for me."

When they reached the hotel the porter in charge was asked if the dog could remain somewhere to rest as it had been hurt. He was very polite. He assured her that it was unusual but he would do what he could; and Mrs. Gray had the uncomfortable feeling that he was waiting for a fee, which she had no idea of giving him for the care of a stray street-dog, which had already caused much inconvenience.

Mrs. Lester was standing in the hallway when they entered. She looked at the contrast presented by the two girls, and pitied Mrs. Gray for having such an unattractive addition to her party.

She looked at Beth's pretty face, and at her clean unrumpled white dress, and experienced the pleasure which anything of beauty always gave her.



Then she looked at Ray, with her dress soiled and mussed, her hat on one side, and her face tear-stained and dirty. It made her feel sympathetic toward Mrs. Gray, and when they were sitting together on her balcony that evening she said:

"It certainly is hard on you to have a strange child to annoy you on all your trip and I never would have undertaken such a thing."

"I think it is going to be more troublesome than I anticipated, because there has developed a trait of obstinacy in Ray that I never noticed before today. I told you how she was at first set upon staying with that dog, and afterwards how she set my wishes aside and carried it here."

"You certainly have my entire sympathy," began Mrs. Lester, who then paused to listen.

The faint cries of a dog reached them, then the sound of a blow followed by piercing yelps.

The next instant Ray was on the balcony like a whirlwind.



“Mrs. Gray! the men! the dog! they’r chasing it away from here! it can’t walk! you said if I brought it here I mustn’t do anything more, so you see I can’t; but you—oh won’t you do something?”

Mrs. Lester felt very sorry that Mrs. Gray should be so continually annoyed by this girl whom she had consented to bring on her trip with her; so she took her part saying sharply: “I think you hardly show the proper gratitude to Mrs. Gray, who is so kind to you. She cannot let you pick up all the stray animals you come across.”

Ray turned upon her a pair of blue eyes brimming over with tears as she sobbed: “It’s a poor, lonely, orphan dog; it’s got nobody but me in the world, and now it thinks I don’t love it. It’s hurt so it can’t take care of itself any more; and I can’t do anything for it——”

Mrs. Lester was feeling strangely disturbed by the agonized pleading in the blue eyes turned half hopefully to her own; and the yelps, continuing, added nothing to her comfort.



Quite unexpectedly Ray made a direct appeal to her, an intimate plea as though she would understand.

“Can you do something? can’t you help the doggie to see ‘a speck of blue’ just once in its poor little life?”

Mrs. Lester did not know why she did it, but she almost ran down the broad stairway, out to where the dog’s cries could be heard. It took only a few minutes to arrange matters and return to the expectant Ray.

“The dog will be fed and taken care of,” she announced, “while I am at the hotel anyhow, for I am paying for its board, and have promised to give a good fee if it got well quickly; that will make them take good care of it.”

Mrs. Lester was startled by the look in Ray’s eyes; she never remembered having seen such a look of devotion and gratitude before.

“You are the best person in the world,” said Ray softly. “I will do anything you ask me to, always—*always*.”



### III

#### DOGGIE

**W**HEN Mrs. Lester awakened the following morning she felt happier than she had for many months and wondered why. She was glad that she had done a kindness to a dumb animal, and relieved the sympathetic heart of a little girl. It seemed as though her feeling of happiness came from neither of these causes, however. She seemed to see continually a pair of blue eyes fixed upon her with such devotion that it touched and warmed her cold heart.

She was very lonely since her husband and only child, a beautiful little girl, had passed away from her. Her wealth gave little pleasure for she had no one to share it with; and had never learned to live unselfishly and give for the sake of making others happy. Now that she was alone she



lived only for herself, and denied herself nothing that she cared to have. She craved everything beautiful around her; but she looked for the beauty which the eye could see; she had not learned to find the beauty that is within, the beauty that goodness gives.

Therefore the moment that she saw Beth, her fancy was taken by the beauty of the girl. She enjoyed looking at her, and resented having the plain-looking Ray thrust upon her notice to spoil the picture.

But now she could not help thinking about Ray, and was surprised to find that the blue eyes with that expression in them, were actually beautiful.

She remained in her room during that morning, and drove along the sea-drive in the late afternoon.

At night she had a disagreeable surprise which kept her going constantly to the door of her room until she saw the Gray party coming along the hall. As Mrs. Gray passed she said: "I want to know if you will let Ray come to my room for awhile?"



Upon having the permission given she drew Ray inside the room and shut the door, keeping one hand on a chair near it. There was no light in the room, and Mrs. Lester gave an amused laugh as she transferred Ray's hand to where hers had been.

Ray felt a cold nose, and then a warm tongue licking her hand, and she cried out: "Why, it's Doggie! however did he get to your room?"

"Ah, my dear, it appears that he cried most of the night, and disturbed the hotel guests. The proprietor heard of it and ordered it from here. The porter, not wishing to lose the promised fee, carried him to me first, for my orders. What could I do? This was the only place where he was safe, and, as he cries at intervals, I have been obliged to keep my hand on the dirty little thing, to keep him from disturbing the other guests. What am I to do? I cannot sit up with him all night, and I cannot put him in any place until morning."

"If only I could stay with him."

"Will you, Ray?"



"I'd just love to."

"Then I will order a single bed put in here; and now you keep him quiet while I ask Mrs. Gray if you can stay with me to-night for company. I shall not say a word about the dog, so do not worry."

"Oh, but Mrs. Lester, I couldn't stay without telling her."

"Why not? she would be perfectly willing to have you stay with me; and if I told her about the dog she would think it was giving me trouble, and it would trouble her because one of her party had caused it. It makes it easier for every one by not saying a word about it."

It had always been Mrs. Lester's way to have everything made easy—a form of self-indulgence.

Ray was silent a moment and then said: "Don't you see I couldn't?"

"No, I cannot see the slightest reason."

Ray sighed because this beautiful, kind lady had such difficulty in understanding her; but she tried to explain:

"When Mrs. Gray let me bring Doggie



to the hotel she said it was to end there, so you see it has to, unless she is willing."

"But she has nothing to do with this. You are doing something to oblige me; besides, you did not promise to have nothing more to do with the dog, did you?"

"I didn't promise in words," said Ray thoughtfully, "but I acted a promise."

"How was that?"

"Don't you see? when she said if she let me bring him to the hotel it had to end there—well, I kept on carrying him here, so I was acting a promise. If I wasn't willing to do as she said, I would have had to put him down then, wouldn't I?"

"I don't consider that you made a promise unless you told her that you would not have anything more to do with the dog."

Ray looked at Mrs. Lester in distress, and then said timidly: "Mr. Strong told me that what I meant was always back of words I said. If I said things and meant something different it was a lie; and if I acted one way and meant something else, that was a lie; and words weren't so im-



portant as what I meant back of them. So don't you see? When I carried Doggie here, I meant I wouldn't give any more trouble 'cause of him; and so I can't 'less Mrs. Gray lets me."

"But this is not going to trouble Mrs. Gray any," persisted Mrs. Lester.

"But she said it ended when I got him to the hotel, and this isn't ending it. Anyway, that was the promise inside of me and I've got to keep it."

Mrs. Lester was getting angry. She was accustomed to having her own way, and thinking that way was right. And here was a mere child showing a standard higher than she herself had attained, even in thought, and it disturbed her.

Then she was being put to very much bother on account of a stray dog; and the very child that had brought it upon her, was now unwilling to help her in the way that she wished.

"Oh, very well," she said finally. I will see if I can make some other arrangement with the proprietor. If I cannot then you



can only blame your own obstinacy if the dog has to be put out tonight. Mrs. Gray was right when she said that you were obstinate."

As the door closed on Mrs. Lester, Ray sank to her knees by the chair on which the dog was lying and sobbed: "Doggie, Doggie! oh, you won't understand either! you'll think I've deserted you—but I'd do anything to keep you mine always, and now I can't keep you comfortable, even tonight—oh, Doggie, you don't know, but I never could do anything really myself—I live at an orphanage—I just follow rules, and what I'm told to do—and now I can only do what Mrs. Gray says—don't you feel how I love you?—only I can't ever do anything but just things I'm told to do—"

Mrs. Lester entering caught the heart-broken gasp of the last sentences, and overcome by the same impulse that had caused her to run down stairs to the dog's rescue, she made a sudden resolution.

"I've decided what to do with the dog."

"Must he have to go?" gasped Ray.



"No, I'll keep him here tonight if Mrs. Gray will let you stay. Run along and ask her now."

Ray jumped up quickly, and the dog whimpered when he saw her about to leave him. She was not gone long, but returned with her nightgown under her arm.

The dog's tail went tat-tat-tat on the chair as a welcome; and Ray said delightedly: "Doggie's glad I'm back, so he must love me, don't you think?"

"I am sure that he does. He has kept up a little whimper under his breath, the whole time you were away. I see you can stay. Was Mrs. Gray perfectly willing?"

"Just at first," said Ray slowly, "she didn't like to think that the dog was giving you such a bother, but after she scolded me some, she said I could come."

Mrs. Lester looked at the girl in surprise. She was contrasting in her own mind how much more just Ray had been in regard to Mrs. Gray, than Mrs. Gray had been to her; and she even found herself resenting the calling of Ray obstinate.



As the lights were turned on by this time, Ray saw a couch and begged to be allowed to sleep on it, without giving Mrs. Lester the trouble of having another bed placed in the room.

Later when they were looking more closely at the dog, Mrs. Lester said: "I think one of his legs is broken."

"Oh, poor Doggie!" wailed Ray.

"That can be set all right," consoled Mrs. Lester. "Did you see how he was hurt?"

"The heavy stone struck him."

"Did it fall on him from somewhere?"

"No, Will threw it at him."

Mrs. Lester sat upright in her chair.

"Do you mean to tell me, Ray, that Mrs. Gray's own son injured this poor dog, and by his cruelty brought suffering to it and anxiety to all of us, and she has blamed you and called you obstinate?"

Her eyes were blazing.

"I supposed she had told you that Will did it," said Ray.

"She did not," exclaimed Mrs. Lester.



“I thought that you had just come across a dog that was crying and obstinately insisted upon carrying it here. But listen to me, Ray: tomorrow morning I will have the leg looked at and set if necessary; then I will have him boxed and sent to Rome, to a friend who will see that he is taken good care of until I get there. I am going in a few days, and then my friend and I will see that it finds a home; and it will owe it all to you.”

“How good you are! how wonderful!—but I’m sorry you have to go away. Will I see you when we get to Rome?”

“No, because I am going to meet my business manager in Milan. I have a villa in Lucerne, and there are some things to be attended to before I go there in August.”

“Then won’t I ever see you again?”

“Yes, because I have made up my mind to be in Venice when you are all there. I don’t consider that any one of your party can make you enjoy it as the old man’s will intended that you should. He evidently meant to give you the time of your life,



and it is somebody's duty to see that you get it. I don't know that it is mine, except that I see no chance of your having it with that selfish woman and those cruel boys; and perhaps no one else will look after you—so I am going to, that's all."

"You are so good, so *good*. I'm glad you'll be there—that's a lot of blue sky; and Doggie is to be taken care of—that's a whole lot more—everything is so much brighter and I'm so happy—so *monstrous happy*! Oh, you can't ever know how glad you've made me!"

When Ray was put to bed on the couch with the dog on the chair close beside, her last plea before she fell asleep was for him:

"When you look for a home for Doggie," she said wistfully, "do you suppose you could find one where some one would love him just a little?"

The tears came into the woman's eyes as she realized the heart-hunger of the child, who, in her plea for the lonely dog, was unconsciously showing her own lonely, unloved condition.



When Mrs. Lester opened her eyes at dawn, she saw the dog close beside Ray on the couch, where he had crawled from the chair without a whimper of pain, to be nearer the only friend he knew.



## IV

### THE FAIRY CITY

**W**HEN the day came that Ray was to arrive in Venice, that wonderful city of her dream-fancies, she was very silent, living in a world apart from the others.

She scarcely heard Mrs. Gray say to Beth: "I don't want you to behave again in the silly way you did at the Blue Grotto. You know that I had a nice note from Mrs. Lester, asking me to let her know when we would reach Venice. She took a great fancy to you on the steamer coming over, and when she asked you to go into the Blue Grotto with her, you should have done so. She is very rich and it is a great opportunity for me to get in with her. It would be a big advantage if we could keep up the acquaintance when we get back to New York. See that you do everything



that she asks you to do; for it must be her fancy for you that has made her follow us up like this. I wish that she would invite you to visit her at her villa in Lucerne; it would be a splendid thing for you to talk about all of your life."

When the train stopped, it was with a beating heart that Ray walked out from the station.

"Why—ee—ee!" she exclaimed. "We walk out of the station like any other city, and down the stairs right into the water, 'cause that's the street."

"Then we take a gondola," cried Beth, dancing up and down, "because that is a Venice street-car."

"There is dear Mrs. Lester," said Mrs. Gray. "How delightful to meet you the very first thing."

"I came to meet you in the gondola I have hired for my use while here; and I am going to take Ray in with me, with your permission."

"How thoughtful of you! Of course it will crowd us less for her to go with you,



if you are sure that you will not mind."

With assurances that she really wished it, Mrs. Lester led Ray to her gondola, where two gondoliers stood ready.

While they were seating themselves among soft, silken cushions, Mrs. Lester said: "Now what is the very first thing that your seeing me makes you think of?"

"Doggie!" replied Ray readily.

"I thought so. Well in order that you may give your entire attention to Venice, I must relieve your mind on that subject first. Doggie is well and has a good home; is well fed; well washed; and the man who has him in charge has grown fond of him. He told me that he was the smartest dog that he ever saw. So now you have good news to start seeing Venice with."

Mrs. Lester again saw in Ray's eyes the expression that made them really beautiful, a look of devoted gratitude.

"Now Ray," she hastened to say, "you have arrived in your dream-city. How do you like gliding over the water in a gondola? And just watch how graceful and



expert the gondoliers are. We are going to turn into a narrower water street now, and you can notice how skilfully they manage."

"They can't ever turn in that short space, so why do they try?" asked Ray; then she gave a little cry as another gondola appeared in the opposite direction, and she looked for a collision.

Mrs. Lester laughed at Ray's sigh of relief when the two gondolas safely passed each other, and theirs turned into a broader thoroughfare.

"I'm glad we got out of that."

"There are plenty of others which are just as narrow," said Mrs. Lester; but after awhile you will not even notice when we pass so closely to other gondolas in narrow places, because you will find that they never touch each other. It is fascinating to watch how gracefully and easily they do it."

Thus reassured Ray began to look at the palaces all along their route, and to notice that the front steps came right down into the water.



"What are those poles sticking out of the water for?" she inquired.

"They are to fasten gondolas to."

"Oh yes," added Ray, "and where there are three or four it's to fasten the gondolas of the people who come to call, don't you suppose? Isn't it cute and different from any place ever?"

If Ray was pleased on her arrival, it was nothing to the enchantment she experienced when Mrs. Lester took her out that night.

It was indeed like a dream-city with white palaces rising from the water, and the moon flooding them with soft light.

"Where does that lovely singing come from?" asked Ray.

"From far and near," replied Mrs. Lester. "It is by Italian singers in the gondolas, and we will pass some of them, and others will pass us, for the Grand Canal is the evening promenade of Venice."

For an hour they glided up and down the wonderful waterway; then they landed on St. Mark's Square, where Ray was fair-



ly dazzled by its many pyramids of lights all ablaze.

“Oh, it *is* a fairy city!” she whispered rapturously. “I can’t talk out loud ’cause it might break the fairy spell, and then the whole city would disappear. That must be a king’s palace with its lacework arches. And oh, look! Do look at that beau-ti-ful church! One-two-three-four-five! It’s got five gold domes! It must be built of precious stones; it glistens like it was!”

“Now we will sit down at one of these tables,” said Mrs. Lester, “and watch the crowds of people passing, and eat an ice.”

“Are you going to treat me to ice-cream?” asked Ray wonderingly.

“Why to be sure. Is there anything wonderful in that?”

“It’s the first time anybody ever did.”

“Have you never tasted ice-cream?”

“Yes, we have it Thanksgiving and at Christmas, but that’s much different. Nobody ever invited me to have ice-cream with them, like other people have it, who don’t live at orphanages.”



Mrs. Lester felt as though tears had actually got into her throat and she could scarcely eat the ice when it was before her.

When they finished they looked in the windows of the shops surrounding the huge square; and it amused Mrs. Lester to hear Ray's delight in the pretty things she saw, and the way she would choose things saying: "That is mine—I choose that—what do you choose?"

Mrs. Lester saw that it served as a fascinating game to Ray, so she entered into it to give pleasure. Sometimes it took quite a time for Ray to decide. She was just as careful about it as though the thing that she chose was really to be her own.

It made Mrs. Lester realize as never before, how hard it was for a child to have no personal belongings; only the things that every one else possessed in common with her. She saw that for Ray, the only things dear to her heart that she owned, were those that she gave herself in imagination.

The whole evening was a never-to-be-



forgotten one for Ray. She seemed to be living in a veritable fairy-land.

When it was over Mrs. Lester put the sleepy child to bed in her own room; for she had asked to have Ray with her over that night, much to Mrs. Gray's surprise. But her surprise would have been much greater, had she known that the reason why Mrs. Lester wished to keep Ray with her, was because she did not wish anything to spoil the girl's first experience of the dream-city.

Ray's first words on awakening were: "I had a beau-ti-ful dream! I was really and truly in Venice—it was more perfect than I ever thought it would be—why, Mrs. Lester! you were in the dream too—oh! then it wasn't all a dream! you did meet us and took me about, and treated me to ice-cream, and we chose lovely things in the shop windows!"

"Yes, dear, we are really and truly in Venice. Jump up and come to the window. There, you see we are right on the Grand Canal. And we will have our breakfast out



on the balcony, at a little table all to ourselves; and after that you must go back to Mrs. Gray. I am going to give you a little present of some Italian money so that you can buy something you want in one of the shop windows. I think that you will enjoy choosing something for yourself and buying it, more than if I bought something for you."

Ray's eyes had the expression in them which Mrs. Lester was beginning to recognize as beautiful; and her voice also was very sweet as she inquired: "Do you mean I can buy anything I want with it? Is it to be my really own money to do as I like with?"

"Yes, you must get whatever you want most that the amount of money will buy; only I hope that you will show me what you choose."

When lunch time came Mrs. Lester was so much interested to learn what Ray had bought for herself when the opportunity had been given her, that she was in the dining-room before the others appeared.



All during the morning, she had been wondering which of the many things that Ray had admired in the shop windows, would be the special choice. She was rather inclined to think that it would be a string of bright beads, as they seemed to hold Ray's attention with the most persistent fascination. When Ray slipped into the chair next to hers at the table, she waited eagerly for the desired information, which was immediately forthcoming.

"I had the most fun!" Ray whispered. "I never had such a lot of silver to spend before. We went into lots of shops, and at last I got exactly what we wanted; and just to think—I paid for it with my own money."

"I wonder whether I can guess. Is it something to wear?"

"You've guessed! you've guessed!"

"Is it round like a circle when it is fastened?"

"Part right and part wrong. It's round but it don't fasten. I can't wait any longer to tell you: it's a new straw hat for Will."



Mrs. Lester gasped the words after her: "A—new—straw—hat—for—Will!—— Why I told you to get the thing that you most wanted for yourself."

"That was *it*. I just couldn't bear to see Will unhappy because he didn't have a nice hat like Jack's; 'and I kept wishing somebody would make him a present of one; but I never dreamed it could be me. When I was so happy here, I felt sorry that he didn't enjoy having to wear that cap of his. I was told I might get the thing I most wanted with the money, and that was it. Are you not pleased? Have I done wrong?"

"No, no, you did perfectly right; you were to spend the money in the way that you liked best; only I rather expected that you would buy something for yourself."

"Why so it was for me. I had been wishing that Will could have a nice straw hat in place of the one that he lost in the Blue Grotto; and so I was so glad when I could get it for him my own self."

Mrs. Lester saw that the opportunity



of giving was more precious to Ray, than in gaining something for herself. But she decided to take the matter into her own hands.

She invited Ray and Beth to have an ice with her in St. Mark's Square, and then afterwards took them to one of the shops where strings of beads were displayed. She told them to choose either coral or blue.

"Which do you like best, Ray?" said Beth.

"I like the blue."

"So do I, and I'm going to choose blue; but I've said it first, so I think you might take the coral. I don't think we'd like them nearly so well if we had them alike."

Ray looked surprised and Mrs. Lester indignant.

"Will you take the coral if I take the blue?" persisted Beth.

"I—don't—know," Ray replied slowly while her gaze wandered to another part of the shop.

Mrs. Lester noticing this said quickly: "Is there something else you see, that you



would rather have than the beads? Tell me if there is."

"If I could have that little gondola, I'd rather have it than anything."

"I will get it for you; but you are sure that you would rather have it than a string of beads?"

"Oh, yes, I'd truly rather, because it would mean more really Venice."

While Mrs. Lester was counting the change, she caught the words that Beth intended only for Ray's ear:

"I intend telling Mother that you chose something more expensive than Mrs. Lester offered us. I saw that she paid more for your gondola than my beads; now then I know she'll be displeased with you, but maybe she won't punish you, because she don't expect a charity orphan to have real refined manners."

Mrs. Lester looked in amazement at Beth, whose whole expression showed anger and spite. She asked herself if this could be the beautiful girl to whom she had taken such a fancy. Then she remem-



bered Ray's eyes when they expressed loyal gratitude for every slight kindness.

"Alas," she told herself, "I saw only the beauty on the outside in Beth, but I am learning to see the beauty on the inside, of Ray."

She was too angry with Beth to trust herself to speak, especially when she saw Ray's quivering lips, and her eyes full of tears.

"Mrs. Lester," she said with trembling voice, "I didn't know about the gondola costing more than the beads; I never tho't about what either of them cost."

"I know that you would not dear. I know that your feelings are too refined to pry into what a gift cost. I am surprised that Beth does not know any better than to do so. I heard what she whispered to you, and if I told her mother I am sure she would feel that Beth needed punishing."

"Oh please don't tell Mother," begged Beth in alarm; "she'd be so angry."

"I think that she would have a right to be. If you were my daughter I should be



ashamed of your action. Now to make sure that you will attempt no more mischief you can go outside and wait for us. I wish to speak to Ray alone."

When the crestfallen Beth left them, Mrs. Lester turned to Ray, saying gently: "Are you quite sure that you do not want some blue beads like Beth chose? or did you take the gondola because of what Beth said about not wanting you both to have beads alike?"

"I truly would rather have the gondola 'cause it's more really Venice; and ever since I said good-by to Tessie and she cried 'caus I would see Venice and she couldn't, I kept making believe that I was going to take her something—and now here it is."

"Do you mean to tell me, Ray, that the gondola-toy is not for yourself at all?"

"Yes, it is for me. I'm going to take it to the Orphanage for Tessie 'cause it's the next best thing to seeing a real gondola—it's the cutest thing!"

Mrs. Lester laughed aloud—she could not help it.



Ray said anxiously: "Are you laughing at me?"

"No indeed, Ray, I am laughing at myself. Twice today I have tried to make you a present and have failed; but I shall succeed yet, in spite of you, before I leave Venice."

Ray looked puzzled.

"Would you rather I took the beads for Tessie?"

"No, no, you sweet, quaint child. Keep on being your own sweet self, and perhaps I can, in time, learn the lesson that the greatest pleasure in possession is the power to give, instead of to have. It will not be an easy lesson for me, or one quickly learned; but I have had a strong lesson today, in your unselfishness."



## V

### THE VENETIAN FETE

“**O**h,” said Ray ecstatically, on the night of the Venetian midsummer fete, “I never supposed anything real could be so wonderful as tonight. I used to think nothing but make-believes could be the best ever, but now the real Venice is better than anything that I ever knew how to make believe. Maybe everything is like that, only I never knew it.”

A gondola, which held Mrs. Gray and the two boys, was just ahead of the one in which sat Mrs. Lester and the girls on this wonderful night of the Fete of the Redentore, which was celebrated in Venice on the third Sunday of July every year.

Crowds of tourists had arrived to witness it, and Italian peasants came from far and near. A pontoon bridge had been thrown across the Grand Canal for the one



night; the next morning it would be gone. The Giudecca Canal was now filled with gondolas and barges of every description. The barges were all gaily decorated, as a handsome prize was to be awarded for the best design.

One which had just passed was Ray's choice; she declared that it must win the prize. This one had an arbor covered with vines; and festooned all over it were many lighted lanterns shaped like lilies. It looked like a fairy-garden moving across the water.

Each barge contained a table set for the occupants' supper, which they take at midnight, as they spend the night on the water; and about two o'clock all move toward the Lido to salute the rising sun. When it grew dark enough, brilliant fireworks were set off, making the scene even more dazzling.

"Boats, boats, everywhere!" said Ray. "There are so many coming both ways around us, that you wouldn't believe there could be any more left."



"I see hundreds way off," said Beth, "that look like fireflies on the water."

"There's so much to see," added Ray, "that I can't look enough places at once. O see that sky-rocket! And what—in—the world—is that? Look! Mrs. Lester! Look over there! Look Beth! Where it was all dark a minute ago there's now a giant's crown. He must have taken it off and throw it on the water. It's made of diamonds and rubies—listen—listen! There's fairy-music in it!"

Even Mrs. Lester was, for a moment, startled by seeing what Ray described. There indeed had suddenly appeared, resting on the water, a huge crown, which for a moment she thought must be another fireworks design, but she was informed by a gondolier that it was a music-pavilion built on barges in the form of a great crown, and made brilliant by the various colored lights which represented precious stones. It certainly added to the wonderful beauty and fascinating strangeness of this most unique festival.



"Nothing could make it more really, truly fairy-land," said Ray in a whisper of perfect content. "Nothing could——"

"Not even a fairy-gift?" asked Mrs. Lester; "because I have one for you right in my hand."

"For me?" said Ray with wondering surprise in her blue eyes.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Lester, "and I will tell you why it is a fairy-gift. It is only to be given to a person on the night of this festival and while they are on the water. The person to whom it is given is obliged to keep it, and wear it herself, whoever it may be, and tonight, Ray, you are the one."

And with a quick gesture Mrs. Lester clasped something around Ray's neck.

Ray's hands flew up to it and she exclaimed: "It's a chain! a beautiful blue bead chain!"

Beth leaned over to examine it and then said: "It's not like the one I chose. I think mine is the prettiest."

"It is fortunate that you are so easily pleased," said Mrs. Lester coldly, "as your



beads are merely blue stones, while Ray's necklace is made of genuine blue turquois, with a clasp of gold."

When the evening's experience was over, and Mrs. Lester had gone to her room, Beth could contain her envy no longer.

"What do you suppose Ray has made Mrs. Lester give her now, Mother?"

"What do you mean, Beth?"

"Why, a turquois necklace with a real gold clasp—look at it on Ray's neck."

"Let me look at it," said Mrs. Gray, much displeased. "Why here are some words engraved on the clasp: VENICE and the date—and what is that in the corner there? TO A RAY. You have no 'a' in your name. What does it mean?"

"I don't know."

"Well I suppose that you must keep it now that Mrs. Lester has had your name engraved on it, but you cannot accept another thing from her; and you must learn not to ask people for things——"

"O Mrs. Gray, I didn't; indeed I didn't."

"You asked for the gondola; Beth told



me so; and now, in some way, you have managed to make Mrs. Lester give you this handsome necklace. For my part I think that if you had any proper feeling, you would feel ashamed to wear it, when Beth has only a string of beads; because you must have said something against Beth to get into favor yourself. You know well enough what a fancy Mrs. Lester took to Beth in the first place, and now she hardly notices her at all."

"Oh, Mrs. Gray," said Ray, with quivering lips; "please, please don't say such things—oh, you can't think them—no, I never tried to make her give me things—I never thought of it—each time it was such a surprise—I know she didn't like me at first, but I feel she does now—sometimes it almost seems as if she was going to love me——"

"I suppose you make believe to love her, too!"

"That isn't make believe," said Ray softly, "'cause I love her better than anybody in the whole, wide world."



"Well, that is a pretty thing to say," snorted Beth. "It isn't very ladylike to say that to my Mother, when she took the trouble to bring you along with us; and you have been like her own child for weeks. How dare you say that you love a stranger better."

"Never mind, Beth," said Mrs. Gray; "I never expect gratitude from a girl in Ray's position."

Turning to Ray, she continued: "You understand; I do not expect any obstinacy on this point. I forbid you to accept anything more from Mrs. Lester. You can wear the necklace while we are in Europe, and then if you really wish to show gratitude when we return to New York, you can give it to Beth; as they do not permit jewelry to be worn at the Orphanage."

This idea made Ray's pillow wet with tears that night, and she felt that Mrs. Lester was the only one who could solve the problem for her; so she hastened, at the first opportunity, to place the question before her.



"I can't wear my necklace at the Orphanage," began Ray, "and you said that I couldn't give it away."

"Oh, Ray, Ray! So you want to give that away too?"

"No! no indeed!" with a vigorous shake of her head; "that's just it. You know I can't ever give my fairy-gift away; but Mrs. Gray said last night they wouldn't let any of us wear jewelry at the Orphanage; and I wondered whether you'd mind keeping it for me at your house, until I could have it again sometime."

"You shall keep it yourself, Ray. I will see the directors, and if there is no other way, I will give them an endowment. You are quite a valuable investment to that institution, if you but knew it, dear little Ray—oh, good morning, Mrs. Gray."

"Good morning, Mrs. Lester; you must not let Ray become troublesome, running after you; she does not understand that she might sometimes be in the way. I have explained to Beth that she must not disturb you, except when you especially in-



vite her to go with you. I am so grateful for the pleasures you have given the children, and the lovely souvenirs. I hardly knew what to say about permitting Ray to accept such an expensive present; but I did not want to be unkind——”

“Of course, Mrs. Gray, I perfectly understand that you would not wish to deny her any pleasure, when her life has been without the things which your daughter has always been able to have. As to the necklace, let your mind rest easy on that score. I take the entire responsibility in regard to it, and will write to the directors and let them know my wishes in regard to it. By the way, did you happen to notice what I ordered engraved on it?”

“Yes.”

“Perhaps you wondered what the words TO A RAY meant? They mean that the necklace is given to this dear child, because she has proved to be a ray of light in a dark time of shadows. She has helped me to look away from self, in thinking unselfishly of others. She has taught me the joy



of giving; and thus I have learned to take pleasure in the power that wealth gives me to help others. Her name is an appropriate one. It is difficult for me to pay the debt that I owe her; but I am going to ask a favor of you. I leave Venice tomorrow and will soon return to my villa in Lucerne. Having fulfilled your contract in bringing Ray to Venice, now let me have her for a couple of weeks as my guest. I promise to return her myself wherever you are at the end of that time."

"It is very kind of you, Mrs. Lester, but I could not think of letting you have such a care."

"I am entirely selfish in this, Mrs. Gray, as I cannot bear to leave my little *Ray of light* behind me. I want her with me very much and I trust that you will not disappoint me so greatly as to compel me to go away without her."

Mrs. Gray was silent and perplexed. She was anxious to keep on good terms with Mrs. Lester; she certainly would like to do her a favor; but she had so hoped



that her striking fancy for Beth would grow stronger; and now it seemed that in some way, this unattractive looking girl had taken the place in the lonely woman's heart, which she coveted for Beth. She felt sure that her beautiful Beth would win Mrs. Lester's affections easily, if giv'n the opportunity; but how to give it to her was the puzzling question. She knew Mrs. Lester by reputation; also that she was quite alone in the world; and that she had the disposal of her wealth as she saw fit. If she grew deeply attached to Beth, the prospect might become quite dazzling.

At last Mrs. Gray spoke deliberately: "I am most anxious to do as you wish, dear Mrs. Lester, but it puts me in rather an awkward position. I do not feel that I ought to separate the two girls. Beth's trip would be quite spoiled if I ventured to tell her that Ray was going to leave her; and Ray would not like to leave Beth, would you, Ray?"

"I would leave everybody that I ever knew, to go with Mrs. Lester anywhere,"



answered Ray quite simply, as she slipped her hand within Mrs. Lester's.

Mrs. Lester squeezed her hand lovingly; while Mrs. Gray was vexed with herself for having given Ray an opportunity to make a good impression.

"I am very sorry," continued Mrs. Gray, "but I cannot have the girls separated."

"In that case," said Mrs. Lester, "will you let them both make me a visit?"

Which being exactly what Mrs. Gray had planned, she quickly agreed to that arrangement.



## VI

### AQUA VISTA

“**H**ERE is Villa Aqua Vista at last,” said Mrs. Lester, as the carriage turned into a gateway. “I think that it is well named as it means, water view. See the glimpses we catch of the blue lake below us; and beyond are the snow capped mountains. I want you both to enjoy your visit with me in my Lucerne home. We will take trips on the lake; and drives; and you can play tennis on the Rose Terrace. Suppose that we get out here at the stable, as the winding foot-path is the prettiest approach to the house. You get out first, Beth, as you are nearest to the door.”

As Beth stepped from the carriage, a little dog darted from the stable and sniffed at her feet, then at her skirts, which however did not appear satisfactory.



As Ray stepped out he sniffed at her shoes, and his tail wagged slowly at first, as though hopeful but uncertain; he sniffed more and the tail wagged faster and faster. Then as though satisfied, he jumped up against her to attract attention; and seeing him then for the first time, she stooped down, exclaiming:

“It’s never Doggie!”

“He is giving you a warm welcome if it is not Doggie,” smiled Mrs. Lester.

“Doggie—Doggie darling,” cried Ray. “I never, never expected to see you again. But he looks so different! And look, he’s so frisky!”

“He is washed regularly and has his hair brushed. He is well fed instead of being nearly starved; and we think that he has such a cute expression that we rather like his looks now.”

“He’s just too dear for anything!” cried Ray, squeezing him tightly. “But wasn’t it too perfect of him to remember me?”

“Jean declares that he is the smartest dog that he ever saw; and he tells me that



Doggie is always hunting for some one. If he sees a little girl way off down the road, he scampers after her. He never runs after boys, but always after girls; and Jean believes that he has been hunting, ever since he came here, for one particular little girl; who was probably the first friend that he ever had; and it looks as though he had found her at last."

Mrs. Lester started up the picturesque path with the little girls, while the dog ran beside Ray, leaping up and down against her heels as she walked.

"What is his name?" asked Beth.

"He has always gone by the name that Ray affectionately called him," responded Mrs. Lester.

"Do you allow him to follow us into the house?" asked Ray when they reached the villa.

"Wherever you wish, he can go. While you remain here, he is your own dog."

Beth was becoming impatient, as she always did when some one else was receiving too much attention. She was trying



to be on her best behavior, as her mother had lectured her on the necessity of making Mrs. Lester fond of her.

Mrs. Lester, upon reaching the villa, gave the two girls in charge of a capable maid, telling them that after they were washed and dressed for dinner, which was at seven o'clock, they could play tennis until that hour with her neighbor's two boys. She would lie down to rest after her journey.

The girls were all eagerness to hurry down to the Rose Terrace, where they could see the boys playing on the court.

Beth gave her golden curls an extra toss as they reached the boys; and she glanced with a pleased smile at the plain girl by her side, and thought how pretty she must look in comparison. The taller boy came forward, and, with only a glance at Beth, stretched out his hand to Ray.

"Say, you're Ray, aren't you? We're awfully glad you've come, Tom and I. We heard all about how bully you were about the dog, haven't we, Tom?"



"You bet," he said, grinning.

"How do you know that she's Ray?" asked Beth, very much displeased at being totally ignored, while Ray was getting the honors.

"Doggie told us," laughed Ernest. "We have always been some cheese with him before, but he only wags his tail at us now. He doesn't dare to move away from Ray's shoe, for fear he'll lose her again. Say," he continued, turning to Ray again, "don't you wan't to play a game? You and I'll play Tom and the other girl."

The other girl, indeed! Beth was getting angry at having to take a second place, but consoled herself that Ernest would get a poor player for a partner and be sorry for it; and the next time he would know enough to ask her.

"Come over here," said Tom. "What's your name?"

"Elizabeth Gray, but I'm called Beth, and we can beat them all to pieces. Ray never played tennis in her life."

"That's rough on Ern; he hardly ever



loses a game. Won't we get a rise out of him?"

The game had not proceeded far when Ray, making a rush after a ball, was followed so closely by Doggie that he tripped her, and they rolled over together. When they were on their feet again, Ray's clean white dress was streaked with green from the grass; her hands and face were dirty; and her hair had come unplaited, hanging in stiff, straight locks around her face. Beth decided that she had never looked so plain before.

"Are you hurt?" demanded both boys anxiously, and upon learning that she was not they proposed going on with the game.

Ray looked at the stains on her dress and shook her head, saying:

"I hate to stop the game, but I'll have to get cleaned up before dinner."

Tom exclaimed as she left them, "What rot!" because he wished for the opportunity of defeating Ernest.

"Well," said Beth, "I wouldn't break up a game because I was getting beaten."



“Oh, you don't think——” began Tom.

But Ernest interrupted: “She's the right sort. She wouldn't do anything mean though I don't see why she bothered about the way she looked.”

The sound of soft toned musical bells, caused Tom to say: “That's dinner, and we've been invited to stay for it.”

They found Mrs. Lester and Ray awaiting them. The green stains were still there but otherwise she was neat again.

Beth was in high spirits and talked incessantly. She could enter into all that interested boys, having two brothers of her own, while Ray knew very little about boys and their pastimes.

Beth had taken a great fancy to the athletic Ernest, and was determined to make him like her. Throughout the dinner she talked to him, scarcely noticing any one else at the table. When the dinner was over and they went out on the balcony, it displeased her to see Ernest join Ray immediately, seating himself beside her on a low, swinging hammock.



"I say," said Ernest, "what did you bother about how you looked? you know you broke up the game, and you liked playing, didn't you?"

"I loved it," said Ray with enthusiasm, "and I didn't mind a bit how I looked; but you see, it was on account of Mrs. Lester."

"She never scolds," Ernest said.

"No, no—don't you see that if she had a maid tidy us up and dress us for dinner, that was the way she wanted us to be? and I wasn't, you know, after I fell."

"Would you girls like to take a stroll down to the lake?" asked Mrs. Lester; "it is so beautiful by moonlight. The boys can come along if they wish; and Doggie also," she added, as she saw Ray lift him out of the hammock, where he was contentedly nestling against her.

The following afternoon the girls were early on the tennis grounds where the boys soon joined them.

"Let's play the same partners," Tom suggested. The result being that he and Beth won most of the games.



The next day the result was the same owing to Ray's inexperience. The third day Tom said: "Say, Ern, I'm willing to change partners. We aren't evenly matched because Beth plays most as good a game as I do, and I'm not so far behind you."

Beth was delighted to have become of such importance, and anxious for the opportunity of being Ernest's partner. She started over to his side of the net.

"Not any," he said, "we keep right along with the same partners if Ray's willing. I haven't helped her to win much yet, but she's new at it. I bet that by the end of the week, you two will be beaten so much that you'll most forget you ever did win a game."

Ray looked her gratitude while she said: "It doesn't seem fair for me to keep you from getting a game, but you see I have always lived in New York; and I never held a racket in my hand before this, and it keeps turning around queer. You don't mind—much, do you? I never expected to be playing tennis like other boys



and girls. This is like a dream—on this lovely terrace, and you so kind.”

“‘Like other boys and girls,’” repeated Ernest. “What do you mean by that?”

“I live in the Orphanage, and we do everything by rule. The same thing at the same time every day; and I’ve just longed to do something different—but this summer will last me a whole lifetime. *Isn’t it great!*”

“I think it’s jolly hard lines. Isn’t there anybody you could live with?”

“I havn’t anybody in the world but the Orphanage people. I don’t belong to anybody, and I never had anybody that seemed to belong to me—before Mrs. Lester, and Doggie—and now you.”

At these words Ernest felt the chivalrous instinct of protection spring within him for this lonely orphan who had thus counted him among her friends.

“I wish you could visit here longer,” he said; “but we’ll do all we can to make it jolly while you’re here. But say, is Beth an orphan, too?”



"Oh, no, she has her mother and Jack and Will over here with her, and a father at home."

One morning, after this talk, Ernest drove up in his buckboard, as Mrs. Lester and the girls were gathering flowers in the garden.

"Why, good morning," said Mrs. Lester; "we are not accustomed to a morning call from you, Ernest."

"I'm going to teach Ray how to drive. She'd be crazy about it."

Ray gazed at Mrs. Lester as though pleading for this pleasure; while Beth tossed her head, saying: "Well I think Ray might have asked Mrs. Lester if she'd mind."

"Oh, drop that!" exclaimed Ernest impatiently. "You're always in a fuss about something. Ray never knew until this minute that I was going to teach her to drive. You'll let her go with me, won't you, Mrs. Lester?"

"Certainly, Ernest. I know that you will take good care of her, and I am sure that it will be quite a new experience for



her. So jump in Ray, here is your hat. But do look at Doggie; he is trying to jump in after you, and he cannot quite make it."

"There," said Ernest, giving the dog a helping hand; "now we're ready to start." And it would have been difficult to determine whose was the happiest face as they drove out of sight.



## VII

### THE FIRE

**F**OR several days Beth had been continually in a temper instead of enjoying her visit at the beautiful Villa; with the drives to the many places of interest; steamboat rides on the lake; and picnics in charming spots, to which Ernest and Tom were often invited.

Her chief grievance was that Ernest almost ignored her, while he seemed never to weary of planning to give Ray pleasure. Then he was enthusiastic over Ray's quick proficiency in learning to drive; and Beth had hoped that she would prove as poor at it as she had at tennis.

Another cause of vexation was that Ernest had decided that as Ray did not get on at tennis, she might like something else better; and so the driving lessons were given twice a day, when Mrs. Lester had



no other plans for the girls. Even Tom did not come over except with Ernest, or when there was a game of tennis on hand.

Then in addition to all these things, Beth was not making any headway in the affections of Mrs. Lester.

As she sat alone with her on the balcony watching Ernest and Ray teach Doggie tricks, on the terrace below, she said: "I can't see how Ray is willing to spend so much time away from you, dear Mrs. Lester, when she pretends to be so devoted to you. Why I can't bear to think that we have to leave you in a few days. I just wish you could keep on travelling with us. We'll all miss you dreadfully."

Mrs. Lester made no reply.

Beth tried again: "I don't believe you care a bit for me, and I'm so fond of you. I believe you've been angry with me ever since I didn't go into the Blue Grotto with you; but I've been sorry I didn't, ever since."

"You are quite mistaken, Beth, for I believe that I am more grateful to you for



that than anything since. That was the first glimpse which I got of Ray's sweet nature; or no, I believe that the very first was the talk which I had with her after we arrived at the hotel in Naples; but I had not begun to realize it then, although I have gone over that talk since; and more and more do I see what a wonderful girl she is."

"I don't see what there is wonderful in Ray, and Mother doesn't either. She can't understand why you've taken such a fancy to her; but she doesn't think it can last when you find out how obstinate and ungrateful she can be."

"That will do, Beth," said Mrs. Lester, severely; the more you speak against Ray the less I like you; but you are my guest and I wish you to enjoy your visit, but I forbid you to say one more unkind thing about Ray. I think that you had better go to your room now, and think over what you have said, and see how uncalled-for it was, and how little you have gained by it."

A few moments later Ernest said good-



night, and Ray took the seat made vacant by Beth's departure.

"Where's Beth?" she asked.

"Gone to her room, darling, but you can sit with me a little longer."

"Mrs. Lester," said Ray, "have you noticed that Beth seems not just real happy lately? I believe she'd like to drive in the buckboard, and I asked Ernest if he would take her some day."

"But you have only a few days more, Ray, and you enjoy it more than anything else."

"I don't enjoy it all of the time 'cause I keep thinking Beth is disappointed not to go."

"You dear girl! now that you have no presents to give away, you begin giving away your pleasures."

"And I've said to Ernest that I would rather we played tennis again in the afternoons, 'cause Beth likes to."

"Are you so fond of Beth?"

"I don't know about being fond really, but I like to have her happy; and I like



to look at her, and make believe that I look like her."

"Do you think that she would plan to make you happy, and give up her pleasures for you?"

"Why I never thought about that, tho' she doesn't do just the ways I think she should always—but she can't know just the way I'd rather she'd do, maybe."

"Well, kiss me good-night now."

"Good-night—and oh, I'm not going to tell Beth about the buckboard tomorrow. Ernest is going to drive over and ask her to go himself; 'cause I'm sure she'd like it that way best."

That night Ray kept having a troublesome dream. She seemed to be fighting for her breath. She felt as though she would be suffocated, and all through the dream she kept hearing the barking of a dog. This became so insistent that at last she gave a start, and almost immediately recognized the fact that Doggie was jumping up and down against the bed, barking in a hoarse voice.



She could not just at once tell whether she was awake or still dreaming; but the suffocating feeling continued, and the room was full of smoke.

“Beth!” she cried, springing out of bed. “Beth! Beth! Get up!—the house is on fire! Hush, hush, Doggie—Beth, don’t scream like that! *What are we to do!*”

“Let’s run down stairs, maybe—*oh, I’m choking*—maybe the stairs aren’t on fire—come—and—see——”

“We must let everybody know,” said Ray, coughing as the smoke got into her throat. “*First — Mrs. Lester!*” and she opened one of the doors leading to a passage which must be crossed, and a short stairway ascended, before Mrs. Lester’s room could be reached.

Beth was panic-stricken and kept holding on to Ray’s nightgown, until she encountered the rush of smoke from the hall, and saw flames encircling the railing of the stairway leading to Mrs. Lester’s room; then with a cry she sprang back, and ran to the opposite door of their room.



Finding that the smoke was less dense there, she would have fled down stairs but was afraid to venture alone, so she shrieked:

“This way, Ray—come, we can get out here———”

“*Mrs. Lester—it's almost too late for her to get—from—her—room—now—I've got to go for her—won't you carry Doggie? he'll follow me—and—get burned.*”

“*Come back! Come back! You'll all be burned—you—can't—get—back a——*”

But Ray was mounting the stairway with the same disregard of self, that she showed in giving away gifts and pleasures to others, rather than in hoarding them for herself. She had not the time to think that she might never reach Mrs. Lester thru the blinding smoke, growing thicker every second. Nor had she remembered to wrap herself in a blanket, as she had been instructed to do in case of fire. Her only thought was of reaching Mrs. Lester, that she might warn her that the villa was on fire.

As she stepped on the stairway, it was



so hot to her bare feet that involuntarily she recoiled, but only for a second, then she made a brave dash for the top, while her nightgown was caught by the flames. In a second she was in a blaze, and the smoke was in her eyes and throat.

With a cry she felt herself falling and then she knew no more.



## VIII

### PARIS AMUSEMENTS

“**O**H TELL us all about it!” cried Will Gray to Mrs. Lester, several weeks later in Paris. It was the day that Mrs. Lester had returned to their party bringing Ray; and they were occupying chairs on the beautiful promenade, the Champs Elysees.

“Have you not heard all about the fire from Beth long ago?”

“Yes,” responded Will, “but she’s so excited when she talks about it that mother always stops her. Besides she was so scared she hardly knows yet what did happen after she saw Ray in a blaze of fire; and she ran like the mischief down stairs screaming at the top of her voice. I can’t see yet how Ray got off without being dreadfully burned, when she fell in a faint and her night-gown was on fire.”



"I will tell you exactly what occurred," began Mrs. Lester; and Will called to his brother: "Say, Jack, come over here; Mrs. Lester is going to tell us about the fire."

"I was awakened by the barking of the dog; and I wondered what caused him to keep on barking in the night, and why Ray did not stop him, as he slept in her room.

"Then, not feeling easy about it, I got up to listen, and opening my door, saw the flames rising from the floor, and *cold shudders shook me as I saw a human figure at my feet*, and Doggie licking the face of the prostrate girl.

"I dragged up a heavy rug, and the next instant had the girl and dog both rolled into it, and then dragged the whole bundle into my room and shut the door; as I had seen at a glance that there was no chance of escape any other way.

"I must have opened the door just as Ray's nightgown caught fire and she fell; and the heavy rug, which put out the fire, was around her almost immediately.

"When I unrolled the rug, and found



that Ray was not seriously burned, I ran to my balcony window to see what chance there was for saving ourselves; as it was the only way possible to escape from the Villa, now that the stairway was cut off by the fire.

"All was still. Evidently not a servant had yet been alarmed, and the balcony was too high for an escape from it to be possible, unless ladders were brought to assist us. What was I to do? We were prisoners in a burning house; and I saw no way to save the unconscious girl who had risked her own life in the attempt to save mine.

"I carried her to the balcony and called for help. I could not even take time to restore her, but the dog was doing his best by licking her face all over with his faithful, little tongue; although his hair was scorched and his little body burned in several places.

"I heard a roaring sound and saw that the fire had burst into my room. Then an idea struck me, and I hastily tore a sheet into long strips, tied them together, and



then tying one end around the dog's body lowered him to the ground, where his barking and howling, at being separated from Ray, roused the servants at once, as I intended it should.

"Things happened rapidly after this. There were cries and shouts; and soon a ladder from the stable was ready for us to descend; and by the time we were on the ground, Ray being still unconscious, it did seem to me that every one that I knew was around us. Ernest and Tom Rivers were leaning over Ray; and Mr. and Mrs. Rivers were insisting upon our going to their house at once.

"Men were at work putting out the fire, and I found myself weeping; not because the villa could not be saved, but at the sight of the dear, unconscious figure lying on the ground.

"That precious *Ray of light* that had brightened my life, and who had willingly risked being extinguished to save me! She and Doggie had indeed saved me, and do you not suppose I am grateful that Ray



came into my life—and that she brought Doggie into it too?”

Will's face grew red. It was very unpleasant for him to remember the way that he had first brought the dog into notice.

Jack asked abruptly: “How could you get time to roll Ray into the rug and the dog too?”

“I didn't have to,” laughed Mrs. Lester. “I just rolled Ray up, and the dog, being so close to her, simply rolled in at the same time. I did not think much about the poor little dog that night, all my thoughts were on Ray. She soon revived and was tenderly carried to the Rivers' villa. Tom and Ernest attended to Doggie, and he is with them now. They were disconsolate when they had to say good-by to Ray; they could not be more attached to her, if she were their own sister. Mr. and Mrs. Rivers are also devoted to her. You know that they would not hear to our leaving them even after Ray was well enough to be moved, although I intended taking her to a hotel until she was ready to rejoin you.”



“Ray’s missed a lot of sightseeing,” said Will; “why we’ve been all through Switzerland and Germany, while she’s been obliged to stay on at Lucerne.”

“And you only stayed one night there, I think it was, when you came with your mother to get Beth. It was such a relief when she wrote that she would come, because I had promised to return the girls myself, and I did not like to leave Ray for even a few hours, and yet I would not have been satisfied to send any one with Beth, when your mother had trusted her in my care. Where have the girls been? Why is Ray running? What is it darling?”

“Come, come,” panted Ray, “it’s the cutest ever—a little, little theatre, like a doll house—come, or you’ll miss it—hurry—hurry——”

Mrs. Lester hurried, while the boys ran on ahead to where they saw a crowd was collected.

As Mrs. Lester and Ray drew near Beth called: “Oh, Ray, you missed the best of all. The part you liked so much is all over;



why didn't you just wait long enough for that?"

"I just couldn't," said Ray, squeezing the hand in hers. "I stood it just as long as I could; but that was too cute, and so I couldn't stay another minute without going for Mrs. Lester."

"Much good that did. Now you've both missed it."

"I'm just crying sorry. I thought that it would last longer, and we'd get back in time to see it."

"I know," said Mrs. Lester, "that the reason you are so sorry is not for yourself; it is because you could not get me here in time to enjoy the pleasure that you had given up that I might share it. However the little show will go on soon again, and when the people get up from the chairs in front, we will sit down and see it properly, without having to stand outside the ropes and be pushed by the people."

"Isn't it the nicest little stage? and the cutest thing was a little figure just like the French dolls you see in windows, and it was



dressed like a flower girl, and it danced—oh—cute—it was just too cute for anything. I don't think it was a doll 'cause it was more like a little fairy dancing. I wonder how they could ever make it dance real dancing."

"It is like a mechanical toy perhaps; but in Paris they do have such things to perfection, and we must see it."

"How can we have chairs, Mrs. Lester, when there are so few of them, and yet so many people standing around, that can get them before we can?"

"You will see, Ray, that when the tiny curtain falls, the crowd will melt away, going on to find some other amusement. They would not sit here patiently and wait for the same performance again."

"But can they find another little theatre like this anywhere in the world?"

"Yes, they will find others right here in the Champs Elysees; also Punch and Judy shows."

"What is that?"

"Did you never see Punch and Judy?"



"Never heard of it at the Orphanage."

"Well, we must hunt one up. Now let us take seats. The chairs are quickly emptied, you see, and directly there will be only about a dozen people around."

"Will they give the show to so few?"

"When it starts, another crowd will collect around the ropes—will you not sit with us, Beth? and Jack, or Will, one of you go back to where we were sitting and see if your mother will not join us."

"I knew she wouldn't," said Jack; "we have been here some days, and she don't care for the shows a bit. She likes sitting where she is and watching the carriages go by, and seeing how the people are dressed."

"Very well, then do not disturb her. After we have seen this we will walk a little, and look for a Punch and Judy show. If we do not find one we will take a carriage and drive to the Luxembourg Gardens, in quite another part of Paris, where we will find the people being amused in many different ways. I must take you to-day as I leave early tomorrow, and as Mrs.



Gray does not care for such things, this may be your last opportunity."

"Don't, please," and there was a world of pleading in Ray's voice.

"Don't what?"

"Don't let's say a word about you going tomorrow. Let's make believe today, that you're going to stay here right along."

"I wish that I did not need to leave you, my darling, but I have to return to New York to attend to important business; and besides, my house over here is burned, so that I have no home but the one in New York. But, you know, soon after you get back you are to make me a visit; and I am going to write to you every week——"

"Come over here!" shouted Will. "Ray will love this—a man with a performing French poodle, who can do most any old thing."

"Shall we go?" asked Mrs. Lester.

Ray's eyes were brightening in anticipation, but she said slowly: "You haven't seen the little theatre yet, but—wouldn't you love to see a dog do tricks?"



"Yes indeed," said Mrs. Lester, rising with alacrity; "let us see the dog by all means."

"Just when we got seats and were all fixed," grumbled Beth. "I'd rather stay here."

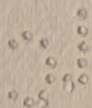
As no one paid any attention to her she followed the others.

All at once, as though the idea had suddenly occurred to him, Will said: "Beth you never told me why you didn't wake the servants up, the night of the fire; why didn't you?"

"I didn't know what to do. I thought I saw Ray burning up and it scared me silly. I ran to the front door but I couldn't get it open. I was afraid to go upstairs again to hunt anybody. I didn't know where the fire was by that time. I screamed at the top of my voice until the servants did come and let me out."

"I think you are a coward—just that," said Will, witheringly. "I wish Ray was my sister!"

"I don't see what every boy sees, to be





crazy about, in Ray," snapped Beth; "she isn't pretty; she can't play tennis or throw ball."

"It's because she's always square," answered Will.



## IX

### BETH IS PUZZLED

“**W**ELL RAY,” said Mrs. Gray, severely, “I am sorry to see that, with you, new friends are best. But because a person is rich and makes handsome presents, does not seem a sufficient reason to me for crying when they are gone; especially since you are with us again; and certainly Beth must be a great deal more company for you, than a person of my age.”

“It isn’t that,” sobbed Ray, “but I have never felt so alone in all my life—oh, it’s worse than before I knew Mrs. Lester, for then I never expected anybody to love me the way she does, except only when I made believe to myself. I never, never dreamed a really person would love me so they’d cry over me like Mrs. Lester did when I was in bed after the fire——”



*"I am tired of hearing about that fire!"* exclaimed Mrs. Gray. "And I do not expect to make a fuss over you and spoil you, simply because you did what it was your duty to do."

Mrs. Gray did not seem to notice the fact, that if Ray did only her duty, Beth had failed to do even that. But Mrs. Gray was bitter over the result of the visit of the girls in Lucerne. She had hoped that the fancy Mrs. Lester had taken to Beth would be strengthened; instead of which a fire broke out and Ray had distinguished herself, much to Mrs. Gray's disappointment and disgust.

However, she consoled herself with the thought, that she and Beth could always refer to Beth's visit at Mrs. Lester's villa; and she intended to follow up the acquaintance as far as Mrs. Lester would permit; although she knew that Mrs. Lester in her manner to travelling companions, might greatly differ from the rich Mrs. Lester in her own home in New York.

Mrs. Gray turned to Beth: "I think I



shall buy you a lace dress this morning. We will go out shopping now, and Ray can come along, if she decides to stop crying over Mrs. Lester's departure."

Ray was at once all interest.

"Will it be all lace?" she asked in a tone of awe. "Won't that be grand, Beth? I never had a piece of lace on a dress, and all lace—just think!"

"I guess," continued Mrs. Gray, "that I must get you a silk slip to wear under it."

"What color?" asked Beth. "I like pink or blue."

"Blue is the most becoming to you, with broad sash and hair ribbons; then you can wear Mrs. Lester's beads when you go to see her, and that will please her."

"Will you get blue slippers for her?" inquired Ray, as though living in a dream.

"No indeed," said Mrs. Gray. "I'm sure they are very bad taste."

"Oh!" sighed Ray. "When I make believe to be dressed up just the way I like best, I always wear kid slippers the color of my sash. I never had a sash really."



Will Beth's be lovely, stiff ribbon that stands out like a butterfly's two wings? Oh my! And a silk dress to wear under another dress! I'd wear the silk outside."

The girls enjoyed shopping, so that the experience of the morning was a pleasure to them both; as Beth was never happier than when she was the centre of interest, and she loved pretty things to wear. Ray was just as deeply interested, because for her to be shopping for pretty things was a great delight. It mattered not in the least that none of the things were for her. The only longing she felt, was that a pair of blue kid slippers might have been added to complete the outfit.

When afternoon came, Mrs. Gray declared herself too tired to go out again, which disappointed the boys extremely, as she had said that she would take them for a steamer ride on the river Seine.

She told them however that they might take the girls into the beautiful Tuileries Gardens; and when they begged very hard consented for them to go as far as the



nearest steamer landing, and watch the boats as they started and stopped every few minutes. This proved very absorbing for the first hour, but then the boys grew restless.

"I'll tell you what let's do," suggested Jack. "Let's just step on the next one that stops, and ride to the next landing; then get off and take the next one back. It will cost only a few cents anyway, and I'll treat the crowd."

"That'll be great!" exclaimed Will.

"Mother wouldn't let us," objected Beth.

"She didn't tell us we couldn't ride on a steamer," persisted Will.

"Besides," added Jack, "it's only like playing at steamer-riding—just from one landing to another."

"I'm not going," said Ray.

"Why not? You didn't promise not to."

"I can't go; 'cause Mrs. Gray trusted us to go as far as the landing, or play in the Gardens; that's all we're allowed to do."

At this Beth flared up: "Don't put on airs because Mrs. Lester lets you do just



as you please when she's around. Do you suppose you know what our mother would like us to do, as well as Jack and Will do? Of course we can do as they say, when we are in their care for the afternoon."

"I can't go," repeated Ray.

"Now you're obstinate. Mother always said you were obstinate."

"Well, we're going," said Jack with decision; "you can go or stay as you please."

"How will that do for your promise!" mocked Beth. "The only thing Mother made us promise, was that we'd all stay together, and not wander off from the boys, or let the boys wander off from us."

"Bully for you, Beth; that's just what she did say. How will you get around that, Ray? If we all go on the steamer, and you don't stay with us, you're the only one breaking a promise, see?"

Ray turned a distressed look from one to the other.

"If I do go," she said, "I'll be breaking a promise without words, 'cause I know she never thought of us going on a boat



without her, so I've just the same as promised I wouldn't, without needing to say the words."

"We're all going," declared Jack triumphantly; "and if you tell on us, you'll tell that you've broken your promise to Mother, and not stayed with us."

Ray's eyes were wide with amazement. "Do you mean that you aren't going to tell her?"

"Yes silly, I mean just that," said Jack; "now you better come along and make no trouble."

"I just—can't," gasped Ray. "Oh, don't go please—please don't go——"

"Now Ray," snapped Beth, "you can't manage my brothers; if you did make Tom and Ernest Rivers do as you said about things——"

"I don't know about that," interrupted Will unexpectedly. "I guess I'll stay with you, Ray."

Jack and Beth gazed at him in speechless astonishment, and Ray looked unspoken gratitude.



"I'll stay," Will repeated; "and I'll stick by you because you've got pluck, and—there's another reason."

"I suppose," sneered Jack, "you've got to be polite because she bought you a hat."

"No," retorted Will, "but if you must know the other reason—it's because I am sorry I struck the brave little dog that was so game in the fire; and I'd like to do something for Ray to prove that I'm sorry."

"I'm sure you are," said Ray quickly.

"I never expected to hurt it," he continued, speaking now to Ray; "I was just boiling mad and I had to throw something. I don't believe I even meant to strike it. I just wanted to throw something at it."

"I'm glad you didn't mean to be cruel," said Ray; "and it will help you not to do such a thing ever again, won't it?"

"You bet it will. I've worried too much about that to want to go over it again in a hurry; for honest, I'm fond of animals, and I hope I'll never hurt one again."

"Here's the steamer," announced Jack. "Come on Beth!"



But Beth lagged back. "I don't want to do what Mother wouldn't like. Better wait Jack, it won't be much fun going all alone."

Jack was used to ruling his brother and sister, and this defeat made him very angry; but as he did not intend bearing the punishment alone he sullenly watched the little steamer puff away.

On their way back to the hotel Beth was unusually silent. She was trying to puzzle out how it was that she, who was working hard to make people like her, and give her presents, should fail; while Ray, who was always giving everything away, and who did not ever seem to be planning anything for herself, always got everything, and everybody planning for her; like Ernest teaching her to drive—and now even Will had gone over to her side.

*Beth was greatly puzzled.*



## X

### A NOVEL BATH

**H**OLLAND proved a land of delight to the children. They enjoyed walking beside the canals and watching the canal-boats, bearing all sorts of things and often piled high with fruit. They were never tired of looking at the little carts drawn by dogs. And the Holland children! They fascinated them most of all.

Scheveningen, the Dutch seaside resort, was a place which they wished they need never leave.

Continually one of the girls would exclaim: "There's another little Dutch child!"

"They look like stiff little dolls," commented Beth; "and they're every one dressed like little old women. Look, Ray! that one has a tiny shawl pinned down just like an old woman—and how they do stick out in the skirt! Do you suppose they



really do wear thirteen skirts so as to make them stick out that way? somebody told us so, you know."

"There's a tiny tot!" exclaimed Ray; "Oh, isn't she the darlingest thing ever? The smaller they are the funnier they look dressed like old women. If I take care of an orphanage when I grow up, I'm going to have all Dutch children, 'cause I never could see enough of them, and everybody would just love them—even the Board of Directors."

"Mother's beckoning," said Beth; "maybe she wants us about going in bathing. Won't it be fun, going in the North Sea! *We're coming!*"

"Here," said Mrs. Gray; "I have just bought our bath-tickets, and here is a bathing-suit for each of you; and here are two towels apiece; be careful not to drop anything; and here is a blue ticket, and a round metal piece with a number on it, for each one. I cannot get it quite clear from the man's broken English, what they are for, but we will go on down to the beach,



and the people in charge will understand.”

“What fun! what fun!” exclaimed Ray.  
“I’m sorry the boys are missing it.”

“They’ll enjoy the fishing even more,” said Beth; “where are the bath-houses?”

“There they are,” said Mrs. Gray, “directly in front of you. Do you see those things which look like carts with a room on them—see the windows? they are the bathing-houses. I will inquire about it.”

Going up to a man who was evidently in charge, Mrs. Gray asked for information as to how they were to proceed in regard to a bath. She spoke in English and he only understood Dutch, but seeing the suit over the arm of each, he held out his hand for the blue tickets, and then for the round pieces with the numbers on them. Next he pointed out a bathing-cart for each, the number of the cart corresponding to the number on the round metal piece.

Mrs. Gray saw each one mount the step of a cart, and bidding them not to go out in the water until she was ready to go with them, she entered her own.



Ray thought the bathing-house very cute, and began quickly to undress so that she would not keep the others waiting. Suddenly she felt the house begin to move, and drawing aside the little white curtain, she discovered that she was leaving the others behind, for there stood the other two bathing-houses just as she had last seen them.

*She wondered what was happening to her.*

Just then Beth's face appeared at her window, and she called: "There's a horse to your house, Ray, and a man on it. I guess you're going to ride across the North Sea."

Ray did not like it at all. Why was she being driven out to sea, and not the others? She did not continue undressing, but kept her eye on the other carts which she had left behind. Before long the house stopped, and she saw a man on a horse ride back to the beach. This she thought was worse than all—to be left alone in the North Sea! If only the house was on the dry beach, she would get out and run back.



As she watched the man, she saw him attach his horse to Beth's bath-house, and to her unspeakable relief, he brought it out and stopped it by the side of hers.

Beth's face looked out at her again, as she called: "Is'nt this the most fun of any bath ever? Now the man's going back for Mother. O Ray, you should have seen her when my house began moving away. She called out the window for the man to wait until she went. Then she came to the door part undressed and screamed after him. He never knew a thing she said.

*"Is'nt it all perfectly great!"*

"There's only the one horse, and he can only pull one out at a time. But I'll never get ready while there's so much to watch." Beth's head disappeared and the little white curtain settled over her window again.

When they were dipping with great enjoyment in the waves of the North Sea, Mrs. Gray remarked: "I think that this system is a very good one, because the bathers do not have to walk on the beach and be seen in their bathing-suits by other



people. After we went into the house on the dry beach, we were brought out just far enough in the water to step down into it all ready for our bath."

When they were again in their bath-houses, the horse drew them to the shore again, one after the other.

When they were dressed, Mrs. Gray took a large basket chair which protected her from the sun; and the girls played in the sand on the beach until they discovered another American, with whom they had become acquainted in Paris.

This young lady was much older than they were; almost grown up in fact, as her dresses came down to her ankles, and her hair was worn up on top of her head. She would not allow them, however, to call her Miss Anna. They both admired her very much. She had a brother, quite grown up, whom they called Mr. Hughes.

When the girls saw Anna they ran eagerly to tell her what a funny bath they had had; and while they talked, her brother joined them.



“Well, girls,” he said pleasantly, “I am glad that we have found you in Holland. Ray, I have something for you. Come with me and I will get it.”

When he started off, with Ray skipping along by his side, Beth asked: “Anna, do you think Ray’s pretty?”

“No not exactly, but she has such sweet ways, that I hardly think any one notices that she is not exactly pretty.”

“Well, I wish you would tell me why every one is always trying to give her a good time. Once I thought she was sly and made up to rich people for the things they gave her; but it’s just the same with the boys everywhere; and Mr. Hughes is awfully fond of her, too.”

“I think,” said Anna, “that it is because she is so full of the Golden Rule. Some of us—most all of us in fact—try to live up to it, but I have heard my brother say, that he had never seen any one who lived it as naturally as Ray does. She is always doing to others as she would be done by. Surely you must have noticed it.”



"No," said Beth; "how did she live it about the fire? you heard about it."

"Why, Beth, did she not go into danger to waken Mrs. Lester? If she had been in a room cut off from escape, do you not suppose that that is what she would have wanted some one to do for her? Even in the case of the poor little dog that was hurt, she did all she could for it, just as she would have liked some one to do for her, had she been hurt and left alone. Then Will told me about her buying the hat for him after he lost his; was that not doing what she would have wished any one to do for her had she needed it? Then she never says an unkind thing about anybody, and that is one of the hardest ways of living up to the Golden Rule."

"Do you suppose, Anna, that was what Will meant in Paris when he said she was always square?"

"I do not know just what he meant; you had better ask him yourself."

"Well," sighed Beth, "I've always tried to get the things I wanted for myself. I



never thought of doing as you say about the Golden Rule; but I believe I'll start in and try, because everything makes Ray happy, and nearly everything makes me cross—Oh, Ray, how you made me jump! I didn't see you coming."

"Look, Beth! look, Anna! see what Mr. Hughes has given me—a silver bangle and the cutest, cunningest charm on it you ever saw. See—a Dutch fishwoman—did you ever? Look at the basket on her arm carved to look like straw, and her plaited hair—*Oh, did anybody ever!* He bought it for me, and was going to send it in a box, but he found us here, and so he gave it to me."

Beth held it in her hand and admired it, though she felt envious that it belonged to Ray. When Ray noticed Beth's delight over it, she said, impulsively: "You can wear it one day, and I'll wear it one day, turn about."

Anna caught Ray in her arms and kissed her; and Beth, looking soberly at Anna, slipped the bangle over Ray's hand, saying:



"No, Ray, I'd rather you'd wear it all the time."

Later Beth said to Anna: "That's the first time I tried it when I wouldn't wear Ray's bangle, because if it was mine I'd like to wear it all the time myself."

Then it was that Anna stooped over and kissed Beth, saying: "I never saw you look so sweet before, and now that you have made a beginning, you will keep remembering it more and more."

"I'm crazy to try it on a lot of things, but I'm afraid I won't get the chance."

"Never fear," laughed Anna; "the opportunities for using that rule come all the time."



## XI

### A UNIQUE ISLAND

**T**HE little steamer was nearing Marken when Ray caught sight of a group of children waiting on the landing. "Oh see, Beth, how little some of them are. They're dressed all alike nearly, but different from the ones in Scheveningen."

"Yes, they haven't tiny shawls brought down and pinned in front like little old women; but their skirts are long."

"Look," said Anna, "they all wear caps and every one has an apron on."

"How do you suppose," said Mrs. Gray, "they can walk in those hugh, wooden shoes."

"I think," remarked Mr. Hughes, "that the fashion for banging the hair must have originated in Marken. Do you notice that every girl has a short, straight bang, of what looks to me like corn-colored floss?"



"Is it really true," Anna inquired, "that only the fishing-people live on this island, and we can see them in their every-day costumes, without seeing other people mixed up with them?"

Her brother laughed. "There is no one on the island now but the natives. In a few moments, however, we will land, and the steamer's passengers will spoil the effect, ourselves among the number."

"Yes," said Ray eagerly, "but we can make believe ourselves away."

"How is that?" inquired Mr. Hughes. "Why cannot we make believe ourselves away when we are in Scheveningen just the same?"

"That's quite different," Ray replied; "'cause there most everybody dresses like we do, and we have to pick out the Dutch fisher-folks; but here everybody is just themselves, and when we land we're just tourists, and we don't belong, or get mixed up with them at all. It's like looking at a picture-book, it don't matter how many look at it, it don't change the pictures any."



“The explanation is completely satisfactory,” laughed Mr. Hughes; who delighted in Ray’s conversation, and was usually found somewhere near her on these trips.

The bustle of landing was soon over, and then Anna took a group of the picturesque Marken children with her kodak, telling the girls that she would give them each a photograph when they were ready.

“Oh—oh—oh!” cried Ray presently, standing still with clasped hands. “I never saw anything so darling as *that* Dutch baby!”

“I must have a kodak of it,” said Anna.

“Oh, Anna, if only it belonged to me I’d be happy every minute,” said Ray. “But I’ll never have one like that. How could anything ever be so cunning and dear! It’s got on a skirt as long as its own grandmother would wear; and a waist exactly like its mother would wear; and a plaid apron—*Oh, did any one ever!* And please, please look at the candle-shade it has on its head—I do believe it has a cap under that!”



"Come on girls," said Mr. Hughes, "we are to see in some of the little houses, you know, and the others are way ahead of us. I do not even see Mrs. Gray and the boys; but they are probably studying some boat with a view to fishing, although there will be no time for that while we are here. The steamer will not wait indefinitely for us, so we must tear ourselves away from the fascinating baby."

"Was there ever one so cute before?" asked Ray, as they moved along.

"For my part," said Mr. Hughes, "I have seen prettier ones. Here is a house which the guide says we may go in. That high, uncomfortable looking object, you observe is the bed; and would you like to see where the children sleep?"

"Why there's only one bed in here," objected Beth.

"Then behold!" exclaimed Mr. Hughes.

With a dramatic flourish he opened the doors of what appeared to be a small closet under the bed: "In there the children are deposited for the night," said he.





“Oh see, Beth, how little some of them are. They’re dressed all alike nearly, but different from the ones in Scheveningen.”

“Yes, they haven’t tiny shawls brought down and pinned in front like little old women; but their skirts are long.”

“Look, ... they all wear caps and every one has an apron on. How do you suppose ... they can walk in those hugh, wooden shoes.”

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"He's just teasing," said Ray; but to her surprise Anna took the information seriously; and some other tourists arriving just behind them, said: "Can you imagine how the children have such rosy cheeks sleeping low down near the floor in those closet-beds."

"Now Ray," said Mr. Hughes, "perhaps next time when I give you valuable information, you will believe that I speak the truth."

"Oh Mr. Hughes, I know you wouldn't tell me a story; but just teasing is different, 'cause you wouldn't let me go on believing it long, if it was just teasing."

"Don't you like the children's beds?"

"I think they're dreadful for children," replied Ray; "but I'd like them for a dog."

"Are not the rooms the cleanest places that you ever saw?" asked Anna. "And I think that the plates arranged all around the room, are very artistic."

As they left the house, Beth nearly stumbled over something.

"What is it?" asked Ray, stooping down



to look. "Why it's wooden shoes! What are they doing out here?"

"They do not wear them in the house," said Anna; "and that is how they keep it so clean. They drop off their shoes before they enter. Let us hurry now, because I noticed a little house where we could buy post cards."

There was much hurry and great fun in choosing the various cards; and not until they were all seated in the steamer again, with the island of Marken left in the distance, did any one notice that Ray was the only one of the party who had none.

"Don't you care for them?" Anna asked. "Why did you not get some like these with the children on them, and colored?"

"I'm just travelling," explained Ray; "all my expenses are paid, but I don't have money for just shopping—that's something quite different, I guess."

"You poor dear!" cried Anna. "Why, buying souvenirs and collecting post cards is the most fun of all. You shall have some of mine. Wait until I divide them. I must



keep a few for my own collection, because I get some every place we go, and I am going to put them all in an album. Then I send one to my mother, and one to my married sister, from every place; but the other people I intended mine for, must do without. Just let me get them fixed."

"I'll give you one of mine," said Beth, "because that is doing the way I would want to be done by; but I don't see why my mother didn't give you money to buy some for yourself. I don't see which I can give you, because I only chose just the ones I wanted for myself."

"What a display!" said Mr. Hughes, as he sauntered up; "but I bet I have got a better collection than all of yours put together."

"Oh Rob," said Anna, "Ray did not get any. She says that her expenses are paid for her trip, but that shopping is not included; so the little dear has not a single one; and I am going to give her some of mine, of course."

"You need not do so," said Mr. Hughes,



"because she is welcome to all of mine."

"I'm glad of that," said Beth.

"Now which will you have, Ray? Here is a fine group, all of the children's dresses being in bright colors; I know that you will like that, so it is yours."

"How good you are to me," said Ray. "I'm so glad to have the beautiful card 'cause I know Mrs. Lester's going to love it. Can I send it to her just the way it is?"

"It needs a stamp only," said Anna.

"Why Anna," said her brother, "I am surprised at your ignorance. Don't notice her, Ray, but when your post card is ready for mailing just give it to me, and I will see that it gets off all right."

"Of course," said Anna, smiling gratefully at her brother; "how stupid of me!"

"We will overlook your mistake this time," he replied, "if you are more careful in the future. Now, Ray, since that card was of no use to you and you are going to send it away, here is another."

"Are you really going to give me another? Ought I to take more than one?"



But oh, I would like to send one to Ernest and Tom, they'd be so pleased, I know."

"I'm glad now I didn't give you one of mine," snapped Beth. "I never thought you meant to send it to them. I might just as well send it myself."

"We can send mine for us both, if you'd rather," said Ray sweetly, "and then you can keep yours for some one else."

"I'm going to send one my own self," retorted Beth. "You're always trying to get ahead of me, with them."

"Indeed I'm not, Beth. I just thought how much they'd enjoy Marken, and how nice for them to have a post card, so if you're going to send them one, I don't need to a bit."

"Yes," said Mr. Hughes firmly, "I do sometimes keep the Golden Rule myself, and so if you, Ray, had thought of me, and wished me to have a post card from Marken, I should not like to see you persuaded from your intention, therefore I insist upon the card going to the person for whom you intended it. When do we find one to



suit your own special fancy? Here is another."

"Do you really mean it for me, too? If you truly don't want to use it yourself, I'd love to send it to Jean."

"How silly of you!" cried Beth. "The idea of sending it to a coachman! I'm surprised at you!"

"Would it be wrong?" asked Ray wistfully. "He made Doggie into a real pretty dog, and washed him, and brushed his hair and fed him."

"By all means Jean deserves a post card. You get them all written tonight when we get back to the hotel in Amsterdam, and I will send them off all right. Now cannot I tempt you with this one?" began Mr. Hughes, but was interrupted by Will, who had stood beside them for several minutes:

"Don't you know, Mr. Hughes, that Ray doesn't know how to keep anything for herself? The moment she gets anything, she thinks of some one to give it to. If you give her the whole bunch of cards, she'll send every one of them away."



“Oh don’t think it’s ’cause I don’t appreciate them, Mr. Hughes,” said Ray, “but you see I’ve never had things to give away before I came to Europe. Nobody in the Orphanage gives us anything to give away. Once I used to think maybe some of the Board of Directors would, but they never did.”

“When I return to New York,” said Mr. Hughes solemnly, “I shall insist upon being elected as one of The Board; then these important matters will be adjusted. In the meantime the remainder of my post cards belong to you, and you can send all of them away without hurting my feelings in the least; only I will keep them in my pocket until we get back to the hotel, or you might lose them.”

That night when Ray received them, each card bore a stamp ready for mailing.



## XII

### HOMeward BOUND

“IT IS very kind of you to come down to the steamer to see us off,” said Mrs. Gray graciously to Mr. Hughes and Anna, who had come to see them off on their homeward voyage.

“We want to keep you in sight as long as possible,” replied Anna. “We are so sorry you are going, that we shall feel quite lost without you.”

“You must come and have dinner with us when you return to New York. I want you to meet my husband, and I want him to meet you. Now would you like to look over the place that is to be our home for the next ten days?”

“Indeed yes,” replied Anna, her brother being absorbed in untying a package for Ray. He was saying:

“This is to amuse you on the voyage.”



“It’s an album,” announced Ray happily, “full of post cards; and is it for us to take to New York with us?”

“It is not for *us* but for *you*,” he said. “Your name is written in the album; and these are the post cards which I have collected during our trip; but Anna has some just like them, and as they are so much bother, always being in my way when I am packing, I have conceived the brilliant idea of buying an album and getting rid of them all in this way.”

“Oh, you are good to me; and how the girls will love to look at it; and I can tell them, ‘I saw that place,’ every time we come to a post card where I’ve been.”

“Let me carry it to your stateroom for you, as it is rather heavy.”

“Here are our two staterooms,” said Mrs. Gray. “And the boys will be there, and we will be here,” throwing open the door and then starting back in amazement. “I have made a mistake. I was sure that this was our number; but you see this one belongs to somebody with lots of friends



over here. I must go and find the steward."

"What a bower of flowers!" cried Anna.

In a very short time Mrs. Gray was back again.

"The steward says that this is our room, so they must have put these lovely things in the wrong place."

"Would it not be wise," suggested Mr. Hughes, "to see the name to whom they belong? then they could be taken to the right place."

"Why of course, Mr. Hughes. The card on these roses is—why—why—they are for me; but I have no friends over here."

"It seems, at least, that there is some one who wishes you bon voyage," said he.

Looking hastily at the card attached, Mrs. Gray read his name.

"Now really, my dear sir, this is positively too kind of you. I have no words to express my appreciation of such thoughtful attention; but I do thank you most heartily."

"Mother, look at that scrumptious basket of fruit, who is that for?" asked Beth.



"There's every kind of fruit in it; and it's just hugh!

"Anna," said Mrs. Gray, "we are somewhat crowded here; and would you mind reading the name on that fruit basket, as you are nearest to it?"

"With pleasure. It reads: FOR RAY, CARE OF MRS. JOHN GRAY, S. S. ROTTERDAM, HOLLAND-AMERICAN LINE."

For a few moments no one spoke, while Ray looked wonderingly from one to the other; then, as though her voice would not come, she said in a half whisper: "Do you s'pose it's true?"

"To be sure," said Anna. "Come over here and squeeze in front of me. Now take the card out of the envelope, and find out who loves you very much."

"It's from my Mrs. Lester!" cried Ray breathlessly. "How could she send them way over here, when she's in New York? Isn't she wonderful? Oh, please everybody have some of this lovely fruit."

"No indeed," said Mr. Hughes firmly, "I am sure that she intended it entirely



for you to eat and enjoy on the voyage."

"Look here," said Beth, "you needn't call her your Mrs. Lester—here are roses for Mother and me with her card on them, and here are boxes of candy for the boys."

"That is very thoughtful of her," said Mrs. Gray, recovering from her surprise at Ray's beautiful basket of fruit.

"Here's another package for Ray," said Beth reluctantly. "Hurry up and open it, can't you? What's the use just standing there holding it?"

"I'm guessing who it can be from," said Ray. "I never had so many things happen all at once. Oh, it's a picture of Doggie, a real photograph! Ernest sends it to me with Doggie's love. Look Anna! Look Mr. Hughes! *That's Doggie!*"

"Well," snapped Beth, "I'd like to see it some time."

"Of course, but Anna and Mr. Hughes didn't know a bit what he looked like. I want you and Mrs. Gray to see it, and the boys when they come from the deck. Isn't he cute with his head on one side? Ernest



is good to me—why I'd rather have that than anything, except Doggie himself."

"Didn't Tom send you anything?" asked Beth, who was so angry that she felt like spoiling the enjoyment of Ray.

"Why should he? I'm sure I never expected a boy to be so kind as Ernest; but I love Tom too. That's my name on that big envelope."

Every one waited expectantly while she opened it.

"It's from Jean, Mrs. Lester's coachman. It's pressed flowers, pasted in a little book. See—see—my favorite flowers that I loved in Lucerne.

"Oh, how kind of Jean! I do believe he's gathered the flowers himself, and fixed them for me. I could just cry 'cause I never can see him again to tell him how I feel about it."

"You will see him when Mrs. Lester takes you driving in New York," said Anna, comforting her.

"He don't ever leave Lucerne," explained Ray; "he's her coachman at her villa."



"Come Anna," said her brother, "we must be getting off the steamer, or it will be off with us."

Then came the hurry and excitement of every one saying good-by to their friends and then the steamer began slowly to move away, and while handkerchiefs continued to wave, widened the distance until they appeared only as mere specks, and the homeward journey was begun.

Not until the piers at Hoboken were in sight, did Ray feel that the wonderful dream which she had been living in, was over; and even that she thought she would not mind, *if only she belonged to some one*. She told herself that she would not even mind if they were cross to her sometimes, as Mrs. Gray was; only now it felt so lonely to know that there was nobody that belonged to her.

Mrs. Gray was leaning over the rail, anxious to catch the first sight of her husband; and the boys and Beth were wild over the prospect of seeing their father again.



It seemed to Ray that she was the only person whose home-coming meant nothing to anybody.

The girl who stood next to her was expecting her whole family down to see her arrive.

Some of the passengers were not sure that there would be any one to meet them when the steamer docked; but they were nevertheless to hasten on by trains to a looked-forward-to reunion with some one, somewhere, who belonged to them.

As the steamer drew nearer and nearer exclamations of delight were heard on every side, as the passengers recognized the faces of dear ones, among those in the waiting crowd.

Ray looked at the sea of strange faces, and a lump in her throat nearly choked her as she went down the gang plank; and some tears that could not be restrained ran down her cheeks.

Suddenly two arms were around her, and she found herself clasped tight in the embrace of Mrs. Lester, who murmured:

*"My Ray, my own darling Ray, at last."*



### XIII

#### AT HOME

A FEW moments later Ray was seated beside Mrs. Lester in her handsome motor and said wonderingly: "Am I truly going right to your house for my visit now?"

"You truly are, darling. I could not wait any longer for you. I have counted the days, until I could have you with me again, and now we are going right home. I thought yesterday that if Mrs. Gray had planned to take you with them for a few days, I would then wait; but this morning when I realized that it was today that I could have you, I just knew that I was not willing to wait a minute longer, because I had the written permission from the Board of Directors, which I showed to Mrs. Gray. I had already had an interview with her husband, so it took only a few moments



to get you. They will have to remain for their baggage to be examined by the custom house officials; and they will attend to your suit case and have it sent home."

"To the Orphanage?" asked Ray, startled. "Won't I need my clothes to visit? or am I only going to spend the day with you?" and her fingers closed tightly over the hand that held hers.

"You darling Ray child!" cried Mrs. Lester. "Do you suppose that a day's visit would satisfy me, after I have been counting the weeks and days off the calendar? Oh, Mrs. Gray will send your things to my house, of course."

"Oh!" said Ray, with a deep sigh of relief, which spoke of a great content.

There was but little more said between them until the house was reached, when Mrs. Lester ran quickly up the steps, so that when Ray reached the threshold, Mrs. Lester took her quickly in her arms, saying: "*Welcome home, my darling Ray.*"

To Ray's surprise there were tears on Mrs. Lester's cheeks.



"Don't you want me to visit you? Are you sorry you have to have me? Will it make bother for you?"

"The idea of such a thing—why I want you more than anything. Come upstairs to your room; it is next to mine and there is a door between. I do not intend that you shall be obliged to make such a journey from your room to mine, as you did in Lucerne—here is your room."

"Oh, how beau-ti-ful!" was all that Ray said for a few moments; then she began taking in the details: "It's all blue and white—what a cunning gilt bed with a lace canopy—looks like it was for a queen in a palace; and such love-ly white furniture—and, oh, look at the big bay window, with cushion seats all around it—why—they're silk, *real silk*, so 'course they're just to look pretty, and I'll be real careful not to sit on them."

"They are for you to sit on," declared Mrs. Lester, with happy laughter in her eyes; and the cushions on the divan are for use also, you see they match these."



“Oh, what love-ly silver on the bureau; a brush and comb and shoe-buttoner, and other brushes! How good you are to let me see the room, just as you keep it for real company. Are you going to let it all stay while I visit? 'cause I'll be real careful,” she went on with growing eagerness. “I'll make believe that I'm a princess, but I'll put my own brush and comb in one of the bureau drawers where I can't see them, but I'll always remember to use them and put them back out of sight again.”

“You precious Ray—everything in this room is for you to use; nothing here is for real company. I have furnished this room with everything that I thought that you would need, and would give you pleasure. I had the walls done in light blue so that your gaze might rest, every time that you awaken, on an unclouded blue like the sky. I do not wish you to see any cloud-specks that I can prevent.”

“Well, did I ever! I'd forgotten I told you about that.”

“I have never forgotten it, Ray, and I



trust that I never shall; and I desire to help you, so that you may never forget it either; therefore I have had one thing only painted on the wall of your room. Look over here at this sunburst of light. See it is rays of light, all done in gilt from gold paint."

"Isn't it beau-ti-ful right on the lovely blue wall?"

"That, you see, is all that meets the eye, but if you come quite close you can read the words of the text which you taught me." Ray eagerly read:

GOD IS LIGHT, AND IN HIM  
IS NO DARKNESS AT ALL

She then read it again, afterwards asking: "How could I teach you that text, when I never knew it before this minute?"

"It was you, Ray, nevertheless, who did teach me that text. Not in those words certainly, but I will explain. It was in Naples that you told me, that if the sky was all blue, with only one tiny cloud on it, some people would not notice the sky, but they would fuss over the tiny cloud.



I was one of those people, Ray, and I knew that I was, while you were telling me about it. Then you said further, that if the sky was covered with black storm clouds, and only 'a speck of blue' was to be seen, some other people would keep seeing this 'speck of blue'. From that talk, Ray, I began looking for 'the speck of blue', and I learned little by little to see that 'the speck of blue' was more to be depended on than the whole of the storm clouds; because they only lasted for a time, but back of them was the blue of the sky, always there, and always the same; it was only the clouds that kept changing and making it appear as though the sky had disappeared. So gradually, little dear one, your lesson is bearing fruit, and I am learning that *the real is that which is eternal, and the unreal things are those which only last for a time, but that appear more real to us during that time, than even the real*—like the clouds over the sky. So you see that the text means all this to me. 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.' You see



it is all the same: just as the sky is always blue—back of the clouds which seem for a time to hide it—so God is always Light, never changing, back of the darkness which seems to hide Him from us. But the darkness changes, and passes, and then we find the Truth and live in the light.”

“How beautiful you talk! I will never forget what you have said—and I just love the text.”

“You have not noticed my new suit,” said Mrs. Lester, “and I put it on today for the first time, in honor of your return.”

“I’ve had so much to notice,” said Ray apologetically. “I knew you looked beautiful but I never noticed what you were wearing—why, it’s dark blue, isn’t it?”

“Yes. I have taken off black, which I had determined to wear the remainder of my days, for you and the text have helped me to see that I must not carry about with me the thought of sorrow and loss, if I wish to carry light wherever I go. So today I have put aside the darkness of the black clothes, to greet you in blue; and to-



night at dinner I am going to wear a light blue evening gown; because we must celebrate your coming."

"Oh, everything is too good, too perfect, to be real—no, no I see you laughing at me. I see what you mean, and of course I mean that too—that everything is so good, so perfect, that it *must* be real."

Then she looked at her rather rumpled dress ruefully, saying: "I hope that the suit case comes in time for dinner; but anyhow the only white dress in it isn't clean. Mrs. Gray said there wasn't any use getting it done up again as I wouldn't need it 'till I got back to the Orphanage, and they'd see to my things being done up ready to use."

"Well, if you are playing at being a princess while you are in this room, I do not think you need talk about orphanages and the clothes you wear there. A princess would naturally have pretty, dainty dresses of her own, and on the day her return was being celebrated she would choose one which she liked best of all, to wear.



She would go to this wardrobe, open the door, and—choose.”

Ray gave a gasp of delight at sight of the dainty dresses hanging in such orderly array, but she did not move.

“Which will you wear tonight?” urged Mrs. Lester.

“Am I to wear any I like?”

“Did I not tell you that while you were a guest in this room everything was your own to use?”

“Oh, then I’d like to wear this one here, ’cause it has lace flounces, and lace in the neck and in the sleeves. I never had a lace dress in my hand before—but, oh—there’s a love-ly light blue dress, and—it’s real silk! It’s got pink rosebuds all over.”

“That is a wrapper to wear in your room when you are having your hair brushed, or when you lie on the divan to rest or to read.”

“Wear a real silk wrapper to brush my hair!” exclaimed Ray in great amazement. “Why I might get spots of water on it.”

“Here in the bureau, are boxes of sashes



with hair ribbons to match; and in this drawer are stockings, also to match; and here are shoes and slippers. Celeste will dress you and arrange your hair, while I dress. The steamer was several hours late owing to the heavy fog, so we had better dress soon. If there is anything you want, tell Celeste and she will get it for you."

Ray did not say a word but got down on the floor to be nearer the wonderful slippers, to hold them in her hands and to feel the kid with her fingers.

"Do you know," she said finally, "this is the most wonderfulest of all? I used to make believe I had kid slippers to match; but I never could even make believe it right, 'cause I kept on seeing my feet in heavy black shoes all the time."

"Well, darling, I must leave you now, but I will come in again when we are both dressed. I want to see you before we go down stairs. Celeste is anxious to see our little fire heroine again, so I shall send her directly to you."

Mrs. Lester went to her room, and Ray



continued holding the slippers, until her attention was called to a scampering of feet along the hall, and before she could recover from her surprise, she found herself in a whirlwind of dog. The slippers flew to the floor, and with short, joyous barks, and also licking her face, Doggie was giving her a rough welcome. Celeste had followed him into the room.

“We’re all glad to welcome you back, Miss Ray,” said Celeste smiling; “but I imagine no one more so than Doggie.”

“I’m so glad to see you again, Celeste; but how could Doggie ever get here from Lucerne? Doggie! *Doggie!* DOGGIE! I never, *never*, expected to see you again. And I’d rather have you here, than all the room, and the silver and dresses and sashes and slippers—so there now, *you know how I love you.*”



## XIV

### THE REAL

“**I** THOUGHT that we would enjoy our first dinner together,” said Mrs. Lester. “I did not want any one with us. But now that it is over I think we may expect some people in during the evening. I have invited the Grays.”

Ray was silent for a moment and then said slowly: “Would you mind if I went to my room, and put on another pair of slippers?”

“Are these uncomfortable?”

“They’re perfect, but Beth mightn’t enjoy herself so much if she saw I had them. Mrs. Gray bought her a white lace dress over blue silk, to wear here; but she didn’t get blue slippers, and it might make her feel disappointed.”

“You can send her a pair tomorrow if she admires yours tonight; but I am go-



ing to watch, so that you do not give up everything, which you care for yourself, to make some one else happy; although I love you for wanting to do so."

"Isn't Doggie beau-ti-ful with that big blue bow? Look how he gets it under one ear when he cocks his cunning head on one side. Oh, Doggie, when a stone struck you in Naples you cried, but I guess you'd have forgotten to do that if you'd known you were coming to New York to live with Mrs. Lester, and have a box of ribbons all your very own."

The door opened and Mr. Stamford, the manager of the Orphanage, entered.

Ray sprang impulsively forward: "Oh Mr. Stamford—you havn't come to make me go back!"

"Certainly not. You do not have to go back while Mrs. Lester wants you with her. But how you have changed! Your trip has agreed with you wonderfully.

Ray looked pleased; then her desire to have everything appear in its true light, made her say: "I guess it's clothes, maybe.



I'm dressed up fine as any rich girl—see my turquois chain? And oh, is it against the rules for me to keep it at the Orphanage, Mr. Stamford?"

He smiled amiably. Ray had never seen him so pleasant before.

"I think that you will be able to keep it, since Mrs. Lester, has been kind enough to arrange the matter for you."

The Grays now arrived, and to Ray's surprise Mrs. Gray kissed her warmly saying: "How very sweet you look tonight; and we are all very pleased to see you again. The children could hardly wait for tonight."

"Mrs. Gray, I believe you are acquainted with Mr. Stamford?" And while the older people stood talking together, the children crowded around Ray.

"Gee, Ray," said Will, "you look good to me. I declare, it was a shame to keep you dressed so plain, when you look fine dressed right."

"It's her hair," announced Jack; "she always wore it slick back tight to her head,



now that it all stands fluffed out, it's all right."

"How did you ever get it that way?" questioned Beth.

"Celeste did my hair."

"Whew!" whistled Will. "A French maid! Well, you are going some."

Beth was beginning to feel peevish, and was therefore searching for something to say which would make Ray dissatisfied.

"I think you ought to wear pink," she said; "you are too brown to wear blue; it needs a fair complexion and light hair; oh I see you have blue slippers; Mother says they're common, and wouldn't let me have them."

"Why it is fortunate we know that," broke in Mrs. Lester, who had approached the group; "because Ray was going to send you a pair tomorrow to make your pretty suit complete. She was so anxious for you to have them that I told her that she might send you a pair tomorrow, if you admired hers tonight; but as you do not, why of course that is settled."



Beth's face was a study. She wished more than ever that she could keep from saying hateful things to Ray, as she always got the worst of it; and now she had spoiled her chance of getting something which she wanted very much. But she was glad that her mother was by this time too much occupied in talking to various members of the Board of Directors of the Orphanage, to have heard Mrs. Lester's remarks.

Ray was surprised when nearly all of the women directors kissed her, and seemed fond of her; for she remembered that none of them had kissed her when she had started away on her journey, although many of them had given her much advice.

In spite of the animated hum of conversation, the sound of some heavy vehicle was heard to stop in front of the house. It proved to be an omnibus containing the children from the Orphanage; and when they came trooping in, the rooms seemed very full. Ray kissed each one, but they were embarrassed, and acted as though she were far removed from them.



Mrs. Lester watched Ray with gratified satisfaction. She noticed that, although Ray showed pleasure in having them with her, it was their pleasure she thought of and not her own. She saw that Ray at heart was not one of them, because unlike them. Ray was a dreamer, an idealist, reaching up for the best and highest in every way; and such an one is necessarily in advance of the masses. These girls had never been able to climb the heights, and reach her thoughts, therefore she had been alone among them.

When it was time for supper Ray was most attentive to their wants, and could not help them to enough of the ice-cream.

As Mr. Stamford arose and held up his hand for them to keep silent, Ray felt a shiver go right through her, as though she were back again at the Orphanage, and her bright dream had suddenly come to an end.

Mr. Stamford started off in his most impressive style; expressing his thanks for the great pleasure which Mrs. Lester had given the inmates of the Orphanage, in



providing a delightful entertainment for them, and an early opportunity of welcoming their dear companion home from her travels.

Ray had difficulty in recognizing the fact that he was referring to her; but she was soon left in no doubt, for he turned and actually bowed to her. She did not think it could be possible; but certainly there stood Mr. Stamford, the manager of the Orphanage, bowing to her—just plain Ray, one of the inmates.

His voice took on its most impressive tone, as he continued: "I speak in behalf of the Board of Directors when I say that we desire to express our thanks and grateful appreciation for the generous donation made to the Orphanage by Mrs. Lester, on behalf of our greatly esteemed Ray Lester."

He paused to give the moment due solemnity, then proceeded: "Although we deeply regret having to part with her, we feel that her example will be felt by all of the girls, who have had the privilege of her companionship for years; and that they



will rejoice with us in her good fortune in being adopted by this kind, generous heart that has discovered the beauty of her nature. *May I be the first to congratulate Ray Lester?*”

He stepped forward and took Ray's hands, while she gasped: “That is not my name, please.”

“It is now,” said Mr. Stamford genially. “Mrs. Lester has adopted you. But you must not forget all that we have done for you; always keep a grateful heart.”

Mr. Stamford was enjoying himself immensely.

“Hurrah for Ray!” shouted Will; and every one clapped their hands, and some of the Board kissed Ray over again.

“I am glad to make the donation in the name of Ray,” said Mrs. Lester; “because her thought is first and always for others. Therefore it is very fitting that on this day when she takes her new name of Lester, her first act should be a gift, and that it should be to the only home which she has ever known until now.



“I have invited all those connected with her in any way, to share in welcoming her home tonight, knowing that it would give her pleasure. On a side table are boxes of candy which Ray will hand to each girl as she leaves the room; and in each box will be found a souvenir from abroad.”

Mrs. Lester turned lovingly to look at Ray's radiant face, and saw there the look of passionate gratitude which always made her eyes so beautiful.

“I should like you, Ray, to express some special wish in regard to a gift for each of the girls. What would you like to give them?”

Ray looked down at her feet, and then soberly announced: “A pair of slippers.”

For a moment the silence was disturbing, and then some one laughed gaily. It was Mrs. Lester.

The spell being broken, every one began to talk at the same time. Finally Mr. Stamford suggested that the generous offer be changed to useful winter boots.

“No indeed,” laughed Mrs. Lester, “this



is the first wish expressed by Ray Lester, and it cannot be changed."

"But my dear lady," said Mr. Stamford with great gallantry; "when could these girls wear kid slippers? And, besides, it would be very expensive for so many."

"They will need them for Thanksgiving, when Ray will give a party for them, and I shall send new dresses, as my gift, to go with the slippers."

Ray slipped her hand into Mrs. Lester's and gave it a tight squeeze, before going to hand out the boxes, as she had been directed to do.

When the guests were finally all gone, Mrs. Lester took Ray's hand and together they went to Ray's room, where Doggie nearly shook his body to pieces, or so it appeared, in the joy of the re-union; as he had been banished during the party.

"There is a package from Switzerland, on your bureau; you can open it while I go to my room, and slip on a kimona. You put your little silk kimona on also, and then we will talk awhile before retiring."



Ray could not wait to take off her dress before looking into her mysterious package, which proved to be a beautiful carved wood frame, containing a large picture of Ernest with Doggie in his arms. When Mrs. Lester returned she was still regarding it joyfully.

"It just seems as if I had everybody that belonged to me, here now; you and Ernest and Doggie—and oh, Doggie, just think! You are going to live with me and be mine always. I guess your name is Doggie Lester now."

"I guess it must be," laughed Mrs. Lester. "But I cannot let Ernest get ahead of me, so I have a small gift here for you. I wanted you to have something to keep always in remembrance of this happy day on which you have come home to stay."

Ray took the little box, and tore open the wrapper, letting this fall on the floor, where Doggie nosed it over with interest.

"What a beautiful blue velvet box!" she exclaimed, touching a spring.

"Oh—ee—ee! A watch! A real alive



watch for me! I never even dared dream about a watch for just me. O it's such a beauty! All blue—and what lovely white stones!”

“I had the case made for you in light blue enamel, and the stones are diamonds, and form your initials, see: R. L. Now look inside and see what is there.”

Ray opened the case and read the engraved words: RAY LESTER, WITH FOND LOVE FROM HER MOTHER.

She looked up quickly and her words came in gasps: “I never—knew anything could—happen more wonderful—than—a watch, and when I heard Mr. Stamford say you'd adopted me, I knew it meant to live here, and for you to take care of me, but I s'posed you'd always be Mrs. Lester to me—do the words in the watch mean—different? *Am I to call you—that?*”

“My precious Ray, my darling daughter you are never to feel again that you do not belong to any one, and that no one belongs to you. We belong from this day



to each other, and when I kiss you good-night, I want to hear you call me *Mother*."

"Oh," said Ray softly. "Mother."

Then she threw both arms around Mrs. Lester's neck and sobbed out her new-found happiness in her arms. After a few minutes the tears were gone, and her joyful face was lifted to Mrs. Lester's.

"Oh," she said again. "Now I know it."

"What, my darling?"

"Why the best things in the world are not the make-believes—they are the Real."











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